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for the 21st Century

DISCUSSION OF THE REPORT OF THE ROYAL COMMISSION ON LEARNING

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NOTES FROM THE DIRECTOR

This special double issue of *Orbit* includes many of the most distinguished voices in Ontario education in an extensive discussion of the 1995 Report of the Royal Commission on Learning. Based on an inaugural OISE/UT Forum Series on Education, it provides the background and prospects for the Commission's turn-of-the-century report.

As this issue goes to press, no-one knows for certain what impact the recent change of government will have on the implementation of the Commissioners' recommendations. Yet it seems likely that their Report will be a touchstone for Ontario educational reform in the foreseeable future. Many of the contributors to this issue are part of a reform process that is already under way — for example, Dean Michael Fullan, my Co-Guest Editor for this issue, is the Special Advisor to the Minister on Implementation, Joan Green, former Toronto Board of Education Director, is the CEO of the new Quality and Accountability Office, and Margaret Wilson, former Executive Director of the Ontario Teachers' Federation, is the first Registrar of the Ontario College of Teachers.

It is my hope that this edition of *Orbit* will stimulate a continuing examination of the Commissioners' report, will foster ongoing discussion of the direction of education, and will encourage readers to hold fast to the mission of education to enhance the learning and growth of all individuals.

Angela Hildyard
Director

Education for the 21st Century

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Introduction

This issue of *Orbit* contains the Proceedings of the OISE/UT Forum Series on the Report of the Royal Commission on Learning — a five-part panel discussion which brought hundreds of Ontario educators to the OISE Auditorium, Toronto throughout February and early March of 1995. It has been an exciting venture — from hosting the panel discussions to providing this final publication — and we are pleased to bring it to fruition.

The Royal Commission on Learning was established in May 1993 by Ontario's then Minister of Education and Training Dave Cooke to make recommendations on the reform of elementary and secondary education.¹ The Commission report, released on January 26, 1995, was greeted with broad public acceptance and general support from all parties. The NDP government moved quickly with a series of announcements on various facets of education reform. Their program, *New Foundations for Ontario Education*, incorporated many, but by no means all, of the key recommendations of the Royal Commission. On June 8, 1995 just as this issue of *Orbit* was going to press, a new Progressive Conservative Government was elected. Although neither the identity of the new Minister of Education and Training nor the Conservatives' education plans are yet known, it seems likely that the reform agenda will not change substantially. *Globe and Mail* education writer Jennifer Lewington reported, "Aside from early childhood education, the Conservatives broadly applauded the NDP school reforms" (June 15, 1995).

Based on consultations with almost 1,400 individuals and groups and on some 3,600 written submissions, the

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Royal Commission's Report is the most comprehensive review of Ontario education since the Hall-Dennis Report of 1968; it deals with all aspects of teaching and learning for students and teachers as well as the educational change process itself. The four engines of change which it proposes — early childhood education, parents and the community, technology and learning, and teacher development — have already become a familiar framework for the discussion of improving Ontario schools. The wide practical significance of the Report made it a natural topic for both a forum series and for a theme issue of *Orbit* magazine.

The Report's release also coincided with another event of special significance for many Ontario students of education as well as for practitioners. Just the month before, in December 1994, the Minister of Education and Training for Ontario, the Board of Governors of The Ontario Institute for Studies in Education (OISE — *Orbit*'s publisher), and the Governing Council of the University of Toronto signed an agreement to merge OISE and U of T's Faculty of Education. The forum series was a first joint venture of the new OISE/UT. The merger, which promises to create one of the largest such

faculties for graduate studies, pre-service education, and educational research in the world, will be effective July 1996.

The structure of this issue of *Orbit* follows that of the OISE/UT Forum series. Following a first section which outlines the Commissioners' vision of education are sections on the four engines of change, mentioned above. A final section discusses accountability and prospects for reform. With one exception, all the contributors were panelists in the forum discussions (we invited OISE's Assistant Director (Academic) Malcolm Levin to round out the section on parental and community involvement) and all the articles are based on their presentations. Some gave us written submissions for publication; others worked with the editors on the transcript. Our one regret is that the *Orbit* format and length of the issue precluded our including the transcript, so generously provided to us by TVOntario, of the Question and Answer sessions which followed each panel. In these sessions, contentious issues surrounding the release of the Report, such as the absence of curriculum and anti-racist education as engines of school/social change, were raised and debated. We expect that these and other matters raised in the forum will be pursued vigorously over the next period of implementation.

We are pleased to present *Orbit* readers with this in-depth review and discussion of the future of Ontario education.

NOTE

1. The Commission had two co-chairs, Monique Bégin and Gerald Caplan. The other commissioners were Manisha Bharti, Avis Glaze, and Dennis Murphy.

The
Commission's
Vision
of Education

We want a school system that is challenging, that is rigorous, that is interesting, that has high standards and high expectations for every student in Ontario.

—Gerald Caplan

OVERVIEW

The Report of the Royal Commission on Learning, 1995

GERALD CAPLAN

Co-Chair, Royal Commission on Learning

It's fair to say, I think, that our report has been well-received and it is bordering on historical that all three political parties have agreed in embracing a report on such controversial issues. It is also a first to have the *Toronto Sun* and the *Toronto Star* share an endorsement of such a report! And of course to have the competing stakeholders say what a good, thoughtful report it is, is something that made us feel we had worked well and had forged a pretty good document.

An entire lecture could be given on the recurring themes and arguments and debates and fads that have taken place in Ontario and in almost all other school systems over the last 100 years. Some of this history has been written about very interestingly by OISE faculty members Andy Hargreaves and Ken Leithwood in a study they did on the Transition Years for the Ministry of Education and Training, and it's astonishing how many issues we dealt with that have been dealt with almost entirely unsuccessfully by school systems over decades and decades. But that's another lecture too.

The very process of a commission like ours makes for a story that is quite intrinsically fascinating, and I'm delighted that George Bedard, an OISE graduate student, sat in on all our deliberations and will soon report on them. A story could be written about the initial reaction to our report, some of it wonderful and some of it damning. The response of a

not-to-be-named school board chair who denounced us root and branch the morning of our press conference, without having read a single page of it, was a particular highlight for me. I'll also remember the scene after the press conference, when the press and the stakeholders raced for each other, and with TV light pouring over them, made statements about a 550-page report having had exactly 1 1/2 hours to read it!

What happens next is that the Minister will make some initial comments on what he intends to do about the report and so by the time we talk about implementation (See Section Six of this issue of *Orbit*) we will know more. I hope another OISE student might still be convinced to follow the implementation process as a case study of what happens to a report that is taken seriously. But you may know that Lloyd Dennis, who continues to be blamed for everything that anybody doesn't like about Ontario's education system, reminded us how little of his report was ever taken into account, which hasn't stopped a single critic from blaming him for it.

Not until we started to finish our work did we understand some of the themes and patterns that we were drawing. Some of them only occurred to me in the writing of the short version, that first volume of some 55 pages summarizing the report, and some of them didn't even occur to me until after it was all written. As I look back now, I see a whole series of patterns and generalizations. I divide these into two main areas: those that deal with the process of change itself and those that deal more with the substance of the Report.

The Change Process

The first generalization is that there is a simple solution to every complex problem and it's always wrong. You could ask Bob Rae if that's not true. Criticism is much easier when you're outside making it than when you're inside trying to find the solution. This is a world in which there are no easy answers and there's not a single magic button. One television reporter asked me if there was one single part of the Report I'd like to see implemented. I said, "We'll have failed if there's only a single thing done because we won't have the reform we're talking about." Nobody made a less useful contribution to our hearings — and we heard from 1500 individuals in person and received submissions from 3500 others — than those who'd said, "If you would only just teach everybody phonics." "If you would only just use direct instruction." "If you would just get rid of child-centred learning." What we learned quickly is that all serious change is complicated and has to be taken that way.

The second generalization relates to how enormously complicated the education system is. Two million people in Ontario go to elementary or secondary school every day — that's 20 percent of the entire population. If you assume that most of them have two parents and a younger brother or an older sister, and if you add 130,000 teachers and their families, and all the people who supply schools with their fuel or textbooks or computers or whatever, you probably get 70 percent of the entire population of Ontario directly involved in the daily lives of schools. That makes for a formidable, remarkably complex bureaucracy which doesn't turn around easily. We tried to keep that in mind too. In the history chapter of our Report, we talk about some of those areas in which the Ministry has dictated change but the classroom has never heard about it.

The third generalization is that no serious change to the school system can happen without the enthusiastic, knowledgeable, active co-operation of every teacher in the system. And those reports that have preceded us, and there were some fairly notable ones, which failed entirely to talk about teachers are reports that are destined for failure. Much of our report is about how to get teachers involved in the reform process.

The fourth pertains to kids, to what Des Dixon in his fascinating book calls "the whole reality of childhood." Those who run schools too often do it as if schools were what kids most wanted to do in their life or, even worse, as if it were all they did in their life. Don't tell that to my 13-year old. I know every badminton game he has, every volleyball game, every judo match, and every snowball fight at lunch hour, but I'll be damned if I can tell you when his history class is. Schools are in competition for the souls of our kids. That's why throughout the Report we try to deal with the whole reality of kids, most of whom would rather be doing anything at any given time than sitting in a classroom listening to work they often don't understand and don't appreciate.

The fifth has to do with the learning process and how infinitely complex it is.

No serious change to the school system can happen without the enthusiastic, knowledgeable, active co-operation of every teacher in the system.

Even today, hardly a single serious scholar agrees with a single other serious scholar about how learning happens. This has been back to Montessori, and to Dewey, and, today, to Howard Gardner. There are 100 competing philosophies of the educational process, of pedagogical theories and techniques. It was our argument that teachers have to know most of these theories and techniques, and to find the best of each them, and to use them when it seemed to make sense. By the same token, although we didn't stress this very much, we said that parents can't know as much as some of them think they do, that they can't know as much as teachers. And if I know something, and heaven knows it's a little bit, about how my kid learns, I don't know how his best friend learns. The issue of parents who want to be directly involved

in the teaching process is a problematic one.

We stress our sixth generalization about the role of parents. Parents have the central role in motivating their kids by the very fact of whether they're involved or care or not. I guess if that seems elementary to us, it's not too elementary in the lives of many kids. Just being concerned with your kid's education, just asking her how she's doing helps her learn more than if you don't. And if you get more involved, if you find ways to involve yourself more deeply in their homework and their projects, each of those steps assures your kid of a greater and greater chance of doing better in school.

The seventh generalization relates to the role of students. I did a tour of Ottawa Valley schools before our public hearings a year and a half ago and I went to a high school in a small town that didn't have the slightest idea of what in the world to do with me. As a result they did the obvious; they brought a whole bunch of kids together, a bunch of Grade 11, 12, and OAC kids. There must have been 100 of them in the music room. They didn't know why they were there, and the teachers and principal didn't know why we were there, and I didn't know quite why we were there. So I asked them what they thought of school. After some warming up and some concern that their principal and teachers were watching them, they finally opened up. And they warmed to the subject, I can tell you. But the most important finding was not what they thought of their principal or their teachers or anything else; the most important finding was that in all their years of school, nobody had ever asked their opinion before, ever. This taught me, and it taught our Commission, what a wasted resource students are. They have a perspective that nobody else has, and to ignore it is a major mistake.

The eighth relates to the power of universities over the school system. This power, which is far greater than we had any idea of, is expressed not only directly in the roles of faculties of education at the various universities but even in the organization of high school. Universities are the main reason why there is such departmentalization, such division of subject matter, in most high schools.

Universities aren't very interested, most of them, in kids who can weave geography and history and social science together or physics and chemistry. When you go to university, there's a geography department, a history department, and a physics department, and they want their students to fit right in. It's a major problem for those many wonderful teachers and principals who believe — as I do — the best learning is real and that means it is integrated.

We only began to understand our ninth generalization at the end of our writing: what mattered most to us were the goals we were articulating, not the means to get there. So the aphorism became: "clarity of goals, flexibility of means." All through the Report there are recommendations which, in mechanical terms, are less important to us than the goal they are supposed to achieve. In 100 different places we say, and should be taken to say, we don't know what Smith Falls should do about something, we don't know what Lanark should do, or what North Bay should do; we know that here's what you should be aiming at and every community will figure out the best way of to do it for itself.

Finally, every one of the recommendations we make we believe is implementable because everything we recommend is happening somewhere in this province. It's a big move to extrapolate to the entire province, but those success stories became the basis of our recommendations.

The Substance of the Report

Ironically some of the people who have loved us and who have applauded us are starting to talk about us as a "back-to-basics" commission. We are not a back-to-basics commission. We are a forward-to-the-future commission. If we invoke some of the verities of the past, it is only to build on them. We want a school system that is challenging, that is rigorous, that is interesting, that has high standards and high expectations for every student in Ontario. We want kids to learn more; we want them to learn better; we want them to learn to understand; we want them to learn to learn and to love to learn. We want kids who are creative and questioning and feisty and independent and reasoning and inquisitive. That's not what the school system turned out in my day or if it did, it was in spite of itself.

It occurred to us in the process of the writing, and this is a first generalization about the substance of the Report, that whether we were focussing on issues of equity or looking at the mainstream of the education system, time after time we were coming up with the same recommendations. Even though many of these seem directed at the least advantaged, they in fact will help all students. In terms of implementation, this is a major finding.

We went beyond the mandate the Commission was given because the obstacles to the kind of change that we

Every one of the recommendations we make we believe is implementable because everything we recommend is happening somewhere in this province.

wanted seemed so great that unless there were other independent forces making larger changes possible, we couldn't get the kind of change we wanted. For that reason we created four engines of change: early childhood education, community alliances for the school system, the computerization of our schools, and teacher professionalization and development. We saw those as four independent engines.

For us, and this is a second generalization about the Report, education is explicitly a public good. If you have an inadequate school or if you find the school system in general inadequate, the answer is not to leave it, not to go to a private school, not to have high-class charter schools; the answer is to raise all schools, not to allow some parents and kids, who inevitably are going to be the privileged, to have an even more privileged school system.

Third, and I guess this is where the back-to-basics stuff gets misinterpreted, we believe that assessment and evaluation of all students right from the age of three — the age we think most children

ought to start school if they have the chance — ought to be continuous. This is not so there should be school league tables; this is not so I can pit my kid against the kid next door. This is so that we can know how the schools are doing. We as taxpayers, as the public, have the right to know what the schools are doing with our kids, with our money. That's called accountability. The other reason is the most important. Students need to be assessed so they can be improved, not so they can compete better but so that systematically, along the way, teachers know how they're doing and can help them do it better. That's the importance of testing. I want to make one final point in this area. We believe in and argue for some province-wide tests, but have no doubt, the best tester is a properly qualified teacher who knows your kid and who follows your kid day in and day out. That teacher is the best person to evaluate and to help.

Fourth, despite all the progress we seem to have made, despite all rhetoric about it being a public school system, the evidence is ubiquitous in the western world that a child's background remains the single key determinant of school outcome. If you want a kid to succeed in school, give her rich professional parents. If you can't, then the school system has to work doubly hard to bring up those who come from disadvantaged homes. That's been true for 100 years and it's unfortunately true today.

Fifth, we argue with sympathy that schools and teachers can't cope with the burdens that are being foisted on them. In the middle of our work, the violence issue flared up. We were visited at one of our submissions by a member of the Toronto police force who talked about what a widespread problem this is and what the answer was. The answer was to have every teacher in Ontario teach courses in conflict resolution, anti-bullying, and non-violent techniques. This is on top of all the other things teachers do, on top of being experts in physics, on top of knowing teaching theories, on top of knowing how to teach about AIDS, and on top of dealing with kids who are hungry half the time. Now teachers have got to become anti-bullying experts. Well it's not real. Unless the community moves in and lets teachers perform what we call their "primary responsibility" — which is to enhance the academic competence of our kids — we are never going to get out

of the jam we are now in.

Sixth, all along the way students and parents alike have the right to know what their kids are supposed to be getting out of school — the outcomes of their learning. Veronica Lacey and her Board in North York have been pioneers in this field. In clear and succinct ways, we parents and our kids have to know what is expected in each class and how they are to achieve that end. And I don't mean the gobbledygook that often stands for what our kids are really doing, which we parents never understand.

A seventh point about the Report is that our recommendation about early childhood education is really part of a larger proposition that the school system should have more resources put in at the early end. If necessary, that means less resources put in at the later end. All of that would make a tremendous difference and by the later years, the benefits would be clear.

Eighth, I've already talked about the whole reality of childhood, and what that means for teaching is very clear — if schools compete they've got to compete well. They've got to motivate their kids; they've got to make themselves interesting. Teaching has to be relevant. Teaching has to be contextual. Teaching has to be meaningful so that when my kid stud-

ies Confederation in 1867, somebody says, "Here's why that happened 130 years ago matters today." That's what schools have to do to get kids interested. It's another reason why we thought computers were so important, that information technology was so important, because nothing tells a kid that a school is plugged into the real world better than knowing that it's plugged in through the Internet.

Ninth, those of you who are as old as I am will remember Arthur Miller's wonderful play "Death of a Salesman." You'll remember Willie's wife saying at one stage, "Attention must be paid to people like Willie." Well, attention must be paid to everybody, and kids who get individual attention are kids who are much more successful than kids who are treated anonymously. Kids who get individual attention are far less likely to drop out, are far more likely to do well. We make a series of recommendations about how to ease the burden of teachers in order that they have the time and the energy in giving more attention to every child.

Tenth, to repeat a point of process, the role of parents is central and, therefore, the need for a proper home environment and supportive parents is a key to school success. A home that values learning gives its children many steps up on a

home that doesn't. How do you get to those parents who don't value learning, who are intimidated by learning, who feel uncomfortable with the school, who themselves have never had proper learning, who don't speak English, who don't speak English well enough. How do we get to those? It is a key problem that must be worked out if we are going to succeed. We make a number of suggestions. The generic one is that it must become the obligation of principals and teachers to reach out to those parents, to reach out to all parents, and to teach us how we can more actively support and help our kids' education.

Finally, to repeat again a point that emerges in both lists; virtually every single idea that's in our report, virtually every recommendation, is based on some success story or another in the present school system in Ontario. That's why we acknowledge that while in some ways our report is visionary, in some ways idealistic, and in some ways even Utopian, everything in it has been done somewhere. Every wonderful idea has a school or teacher in Ontario doing it as we speak. All we have to do is make it applicable to every school in Ontario. That's the challenge now for you and for your colleagues, and I wish us all luck in getting there.

Let's Work With Teachers

A Critical View of the Report's Vision for Schools

CLIVE BECK

Professor, Department of History and
Philosophy of Education, OISE

My focus is on the Commissioner's central proposal, their "curriculum of literacies," as they call it. This is, as they say, "the heart of our report: our vision of what we wish the entire learning system looked like" (Short Version, p. 25). According to this vision, students would learn much more in school,

and acquire a "love of learning." Achieving this goal would involve having a provincial curriculum, which would cover both the "old basics" (such as reading, writing, mathematics, science, history, geography) and the "new basics" (such as computer literacy and group-learning skills). For Grades 1 to 9, this "common curriculum" would specify "90 percent of the learning agenda," with "10 percent of the curriculum ... available for definition at the school level" (Short Version, p. 30).

In my view, the emphasis on learning

is a major strength of the Report. I agree that students at present are not learning as much as they could in school — the curriculum is not sufficiently cumulative and there is wasteful repetition. Also, I agree that students are not acquiring a love of learning to any great extent. On the contrary, there is evidence that from as early as senior kindergarten, school begins to undermine their love of learning (see Michael Apple in *Ideology and Curriculum*), which is why I worry about starting at age three, if the program is just watered-down Grade 1. This lack of interest in learning in turn affects the amount of learning that goes on, since students often don't like what they are doing and teachers have to "drag the horse to water, and try to make it drink." Further, students don't continue to learn in later life to the extent desirable, especially in the areas of school instruction. Few, for example, go on reading science

books, history books, plays, poetry, or even classic novels.

But what is the solution? I feel that the one proposed by the Commission has significant flaws and should not be adopted without major modification. The report implies that teachers don't really know what they are aiming at, and that, insofar as they do, they tend to be less than diligent in pursuing it. Accordingly, the solution it offers is to have the Ministry of Education and Training make clear at the provincial level what the specific learnings should be for each subject and each grade level and then induce teachers to work harder to produce these learnings through a combination of (1) a provincial report card which would list the specific learnings, which teachers would have to check off for each student, (2) a beefed-up teacher training that would consist very largely in becoming familiar with the specific school learnings and how to assess them in students (Vol II, p. 141), and (3) closer scrutiny of teachers' performance by the community and external agencies, with the possibility at least every five years of a teacher losing his or her job because of inadequate promotion of these learnings.

To begin with, I suggest a different analysis of the present situation. First, I think most teachers have a fairly good idea of what parents and the general public would like from schooling — namely, a higher level of academic knowledge and skill in roughly the areas mentioned by the Commission. The Commission's goals are not new; teachers are well aware of them from the popular media and from their own upbringing and education. (Most teachers, after all, are university graduates and, increasingly, have master's and even doctoral degrees, whether in their subject area or in educational theory and practice.)

Second, however, while aware of these goals, many teachers as professionals see problems in them. Having an intimate knowledge of children and their needs, they sense that the goals are too narrow. Accordingly, as time permits, they supplement them with other learnings — personal, social, cultural, recreational.

Third, teachers find that our culture and society don't offer enough support for traditional academic goals: adults watch TV sitcoms all week and sports on the weekend, but want their children to read Dostoyevsky on the subway. We

may compare it to people who never darken the door of a place of worship wanting their children to be given a rigorous religious education.

Finally, at a personal level, teachers feel under attack from the media and swamped with new responsibilities — integration of special needs children, breakfast programs, fundraising, AIDS awareness, conflict resolution, and so on — and as a result they often don't have the energy or the morale for additional efforts at academic instruction.

In my view, then, it is for reasons such as these that academic learning in schools falls short of our wishes, and not because teachers are unclear about the goals and unwilling to pursue them. I don't want to portray teachers as paragons of virtue; after all, they're only human. They could

It is much too intellectual in orientation; its focus is almost exclusively on the mind, on rational aspects of life.

often try harder; they could take more initiative in seeking continued professional education; and, in relation to parents in particular, they are sometimes defensive and uncommunicative. But once we understand the school situation, the better will we recognize that teachers are no more and no less perceptive or conscientious than those who work in other professions (e.g., doctors, lawyers, university professors) and for whom we do not demand a certification review every five years.

With this different analysis, it should be clear why the Commission's solution is in many ways inappropriate. Teachers don't need a highly detailed curriculum imposed on them. They already have a great deal of relevant knowledge of curriculum goals and content, especially in language arts, mathematics, and science — the areas of greatest public concern. Of course, some directives and regulations should be imposed where necessary, as in any profession, and various agencies and interest groups should make their views known forcefully and

in the clearest possible terms. But the dialogue must be two way, not just top-down, and a great many learning outcomes must be left largely to the professional judgment of teachers.

Further, teachers don't need more pressure; rather, they need support and help. The pressure they are under already is doing more harm than good. What kinds of help do they need? Many of these are mentioned by the Commission. Training, both pre-service and in-service. Parental and community support, for example, with breakfast programs, fundraising, conflict management, and joint teacher-parent programs involving parents reading to children at home. Help with clarifying goals: at present Ministry documents tend to be either too general (e.g., many of the "guidelines") or too specific (e.g., much of *The Common Curriculum*). Help in adapting to local needs. Training and support in relating to parents. Help from the TV industry, especially with programming that is less materialistic, less violent, and more intellectually stimulating. Help in the reporting process: a provincial report card may be a good idea, if it doesn't attempt to specify in detail almost every learning outcome. Above all, teachers need parents and other individuals and groups in society to pull in the same direction as the school in trying to promote the learning and well-being of children. The school cannot solve society's ills on its own. No matter what we do, the ideas and values of the larger community — including lack of interest in learning — keep flooding into the school and frustrating teachers' best efforts.

In principle, the attempt to control the outputs of a profession to the degree proposed by the Commission is inappropriate. We would never do this for law, medicine, or engineering; and we do not do it for university teaching, another profession which aims to produce learning and love of learning of the kind the Commission wants. Some public control is appropriate for professions; certain outcomes, it is generally agreed, are imperative and others intolerable. But the almost complete control of schooling envisaged by the Commission is neither possible nor desirable. Nancie Atwell has said that curriculum development is "intellectual barn-raising." And like literal barn-raising, while curriculum development must conform to certain government prescriptions and proscriptions, its very success

depends a great deal on on-site inventiveness and adaptation to local conditions.

The issue, however, is not just one of process, of central versus local initiative, of two-way dialogue. I also have problems with the substance of the vision for schools proposed by the Commission. Most importantly, it is much too intellectual in orientation; its focus is almost

technician who is transmitting a predetermined curriculum as efficiently as possible to students — he or she will not be learning, and so will not be the model of continuing to learn (and loving it) that the students need.

Not only does the Commission emphasize intellectual learning almost exclusively, it focusses most of the time on a fairly narrow band of academic disciplines. It mentions a few moral virtues students must acquire and some interpersonal learning skills, but it largely neglects general life values, popular culture, worldviews, life planning (apart from career planning), friendship, relationships, community. There are several problems with this. First, if students don't study "way of life" issues they won't be able to see where the other academic learning fits in — they will not grasp its importance — and so will lack motivation to study it. Second, without personal and social learning, students won't acquire essential job skills. As the job market shifts (as Peter Drucker has described it) away from "making and moving things" towards knowledge and service industries, then people skills and being able to see where life and society are going will become increasingly

important for employment. Finally, and obviously, schools should help students with way of life issues: students should be learning "how to live." Of course, traditional academic learning, and coming to love learning, are essential to learning how to live well. But there is much more, and without that "much more," even the love of learning will not emerge.

The last Royal Commission report on schooling — the Hall-Dennis report — was called *Living and Learning*; this one, significantly, only mentions *Learning* in its title. While this report is in many ways a necessary corrective to Hall-Dennis, I believe its neglect of *living* — both in the classroom and beyond — is potentially fatal. True, if students don't acquire a great deal of academic content and skill, they won't be able to live as fully as they might, or, increasingly, earn a living. But equally, if students (and teachers) are not allowed really to live in schools and classrooms — if they are just channeled, poked, lectured, tested, reviewed, and brow-beaten — they won't learn any more than at present and won't acquire the love of learning we all agree is so crucial for their well-being and for the well-being of society.

exclusively on the mind, on rational aspects of life. And this simply won't work in the future any more than it has in the past. If students are to learn more in school, and are to have greater love of learning, learning must be part of a way of life. What is needed is a "learning community" in the classroom (as described by John Goodlad, Donald Graves, Jane Roland Martin, Nel Noddings, Ralph Peterson, Thomas Sergiovanni, George Wood, and others), one in which learning is more social, more emotional, more purposeful, more natural; one in which the peer group supports learning rather than discouraging it. I'm all for the life of the mind (it's about all we can afford these days!) — I do read Dostoyevsky (and Virginia Woolf) on the subway. But paradoxically, for most people the life of the mind can only be cultivated in a setting that is rich socially and emotionally: cleverness in isolation is an illusion (which just happens to be one of the themes of Dostoyevsky's *Crime and Punishment*).

We might note, by the way, that part of what is required for a learning community is that the teacher be learning too, and in many of the same areas as the students. Students catch the love and habit of learning in large measure from the teacher. But if the teacher is not allowed to pursue inquiry in unexpected directions — if he or she is simply a

Classroom Stories

Breathing Life into the Discussion

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When I showed my son the Royal Commission's Report on Education, I mentioned to him that both he and I were included within it, along with his grandma. He disappeared upstairs with the CD-ROM version and sometime later returned, announcing that he couldn't locate any of our names in its contents. But, of course, we are there as parent, child, teacher, and student, and grandma as a concerned citizen of Ontario. But,

with apologies to the Commissioners, as readers, we begin to examine text from the particulars of our life experiences, and then we move to the universal truths, not always a simple process.

At school my colleagues were quick to inquire about my advance copy of the report: the drama professor: "Does it discuss the arts in education?"; the mathematics professor: "What are their statements on the teaching of math?"; the research professor: "What have they said about classroom-based research?"

You see, Commissioners, your words are very significant to those of us in education, and each of us began the report

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with a personal response, but the subsequent discussions quickly moved into the general principles of the Report, and the dialogue will continue, as it should, for years and years.

I have been inside schools for 50 years. As a child I entered school in the year the Allied Forces liberated Auschwitz, just after the death of President Franklin Roosevelt. In those ensuing five decades, I have witnessed so many changes in our school systems. Fortunately, I was one of those children who loved every moment of school, every class, every teacher and, perhaps, that is why I entered the profession, at 17, teaching my first class, 44 children, in Grade 5. I was certainly an inadequate leader, badly prepared, immature, and not ready for the world of school that faced me everyday. But 36 years later, I remember every name and every face from that first classroom. In a hop, skip, and a jump, I found myself in a faculty of education, helping prepare teachers for their next 30 years of working with young people, in the next millennium. After a speech in New York last year, a teacher came up to me with tears in her eyes and said to me, "David, how do I get to be good? I want to be a good teacher." And my too simple answer at that time was, "Hang around with other good teachers." But I wish that I could have given her this report, that says we must create communities of learners, not just of children, but communities where teachers are involved in the learning as well, where those of us who have chosen to spend our entire working lives in school can continue to grow.

To understand the strength of this report, one only need examine the references and endnotes at the close of each chapter to comprehend the enormous amount of materials devoted to educational change. While the recommendations draw our attention, and the library of books, articles, and reports documents the problems, the reportage-style of the authors presents those of us who weren't present at the town-hall meetings with a wonderful collection of stories about the place called school, an anthology that represents and illuminates the diverse dreams for education of so many of us in Ontario.

I read in the local newspaper that a columnist, angry with the Report for its popular acceptance, stated that a report that everyone liked wasn't of much use. He doesn't understand that for those of

us who care about children's education, there is much consensus about how children learn: families are important, early childhood is the best indicator of future growth, and so on. This report is fair minded and full of wisdom. The problem

It is a great folly to act as though schools alone are responsible for societal malaise.

lies in how we go about implementing these agreed-upon goals.

In his report on schools, John Goodlad says that it is a great folly to act as though schools alone are responsible for societal malaise and to assume that reformed schools, restructured schools, renewed schools by themselves will bring into human affairs the principles and ideas we wish to celebrate. The arts writer Maxine Greene states that the existential context of education

sometimes seems superficial and absurd compared to the appalling actualities of family breakdown, homelessness, violence and the savage inequalities that children face. Like their elders, children and young persons inhabit a world full of moral uncertainty, a world in which it appears that almost nothing can be done to reduce suffering, contain massacres and protect human rights. Daily we see the faces of refugee children in search of their mothers, of teenage girls repeatedly raped by soldiers, of ruthless people staring at the charred remains of churches and libraries, and we worry that these events may strike our children as little more than virtual reality. We feel numb and are persuaded to look away. (Greene, 1995)

Umberto Eco, the Italian critic of popular culture, calls for a return to individual resistance, where each one of us can experience the sense of new possibilities and new beginnings, where each one of us must struggle for a sense of hope. We need teachers to be such people, individuals who reach out to one another, who seek meaning in their teaching lives, undaunted by institutional paralysis. The authors of the Report say that teachers are heroes. However, "They talk about themselves as the front-line troops of the edu-

cation system, the ones that are in the trenches each and every day. Is this a happy metaphor for schooling?" Nonetheless, this is the metaphor of many teachers as they attempt to describe what they feel their situations to be. How will we change the symbols of frustration?

How does motivation theory work? Why do we strive for personal fulfilment? Is the challenge of the work itself and the recognition of individual contributions to the organization part of desired change? We might ask what types of school environments can best sustain a teacher's sense of personal motivation. And how do we stimulate achievement? We know that collaboration is necessary for change; we know that supportive learning communities provide opportunities for interaction and caring between teachers, and between teachers and students. Are we the only profession left where promotion means out of the place where we work, out of the reach of the child, the "up and out" philosophy of success? Can we give teachers in their own classrooms opportunities to make professional decisions about their own work and about how children learn? "The language of education reform has too often been dominated by the harshness of bureaucracy, control, competition, and intervention. It is sometimes a discouraging language of distrust and inspection" (Clark & Astuto, 1994). But this report is different. It suggests that schools need to be built on principles of community, democracy and social justice. Certainly we cannot reform the schools without the teachers' support, ownership, and involvement in these changes. As the Report indicates, we need to look at other working models from professions in similar fields and examine how they deal with the concept of partnership and apprenticeship, a reciprocity of roles. Most important, we need to work in dedicated schools concerned with becoming better and more professional places of learning, so that our young teacher candidates have models for their future classroom cultures. We who work in the university will have to define our jobs carefully, but we are part of the community, part of the support those classrooms require. We can't just visit the school once a year "wearing a good suit"; we must be included in its very life. As we discuss this report, teams of teachers, principals, administrators, along with Faculty of Education staff, and, for the first time, present student

teachers are engaged in reading the applications of thousands of young people in order to select 850 to be admitted to our Faculty next year. It is a daunting task because those applications represent thousands of voices of people who want to be in our schools, who want to work with our children.

When the Commission asks for teacher recertification every five years, I recognize that they want to ensure that teachers continue to acquire new ideas, techniques, and to demonstrate their growth and development, and I am interested in how we as a profession can achieve this. Right now, we have thousands and thousands of teachers taking courses throughout Ontario, in methodology and theory and other related topics,

Are we the only profession left where promotion means out of the place where we work, out of the reach of the child, the "up and out" philosophy of success?

but we want to see our profession as a whole taking part in educational change. What about computer networks where teachers are talking to their colleagues on e-mail and Internet? What about courses given in long-distance modes, such as those at Simon Fraser? Can we get together and plan dozens and dozens of ways of helping each other become inquirers and lifelong learners? How many plans can we invent or reinvent and then implement, to make sure that as a profession we are growing in our compassion, in our theory, in our knowledge, and in our practice? How can we continue to become good teachers? How do you continue growth for life? Let us remember, as Gordon Wells says, that reflection is not enough by itself. To benefit our children in schools our reflection needs to lead to specific plans for change that are put into action and then subjected to observation and further reflection. We want school improvement in action. It's this ongoing cycle of

research with which we can hope to change our schools from within.

Michael Fullan says that schools will never succeed until teachers, individually and collectively, become inquirers, learners, and improvers, as a normal part of their every day work. Gordon Wells says that we must change schools from within by creating communities of inquiry. When teachers join a community of practice, and work with others who have already acquired some expertise, when the children in those classrooms are involved and see themselves as learners who can look at themselves learning, when the results are shared with colleagues in forums that engender supportive, co-operative interaction, then teachers will see themselves as learners as well, and the classrooms will be the centres of change.

I look around at my own good fortune. I have access to a library with the best materials one could possibly find in education today. Thirty journals and periodicals come across my desk monthly and I can read, select, and copy those articles that will help me in my work. I have opportunities to meet with educators from all over the world at conferences, in my own office, and on e-mail. I work with colleagues at OISE and the Faculty of Education that are authorities in their own fields. They broaden me, they include me a team member, they push me. I observe the classroom work of professional, dedicated teachers. I watch student teachers struggling to turn theory into practice, and I work with children in schools. All these resources are necessary for my change and growth. How will we go about, as the Report suggests, making all of our teachers feel and act as professionals?

The Commissioners have placed great emphasis on young children's education, beginning with support at age three. As a parent, I relied heavily on daycare. My child had support in literacy strength from the very beginning and he attended daycare right in the OISE building, where I go to work. We know that child development requires a concerted community effort.

A proverb says, "Hope is a tiny thing with feathers." Those of us who teach want to thank this Commission for its report full of hope, in the stories they recount, in the information they have uncovered, and, between the lines of its recommendations, the dream of better schools for our young people. Of course,

the opposite of hope is cynicism and in our world today, this mode of thinking is far too prevalent. It is a simple escape for those of us in education to assume we can't change a system, that nothing will happen, that no one notices us in the trenches. But this report breathes life into our ongoing discussion on the future of our children's lives, and I, as a teacher and parent, am heartened. So is grandma.

I will end where I began, a half century ago, 50 years of school. As the millennium approaches, we who will be grandparents, senior citizens, white-haired teachers, having lived our lives in school, trust that the new teachers will ask to hear our stories and to see our photo albums of what life was like in the last century inside the classroom. And then, all of us will have to follow the bread crumbs of childhood back through the forest to where all children truly live, so that we can remember who we were, once upon a

time, everyone in this room, entering school, letting go of our parent's hand, and joining society. I have borrowed this hundred-year old skipping rhyme from Ireland:

David Booth is my name,
Canada's my nation,
Toronto is my dwelling place,
And school's my occupation.

I want it as my epitaph. I have been in school all my life and I recognize the strength this report will give teachers in building even better places called schools for the next 50 years.

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Elevating Our Spirits to What Is Possible

Ontario Education at a Crossroads

VERONICA LACEY

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The Royal Commission on Learning has produced a truly excellent report. It has received wide acclaim and support from different groups because it expresses publicly our aspirations for school systems and what is best about them. We are at a crossroads in Ontario education now at least partly because the report elevates our spirits to what is possible. It has very carefully documented what works in schools and it strikes a nice balance between important polarities: between autonomy and responsibility, accountability and empowerment, between practice and theory, centralized and de-centralized power, between the personal and the public, action and reflection, and between pressure and support.

What it does, I believe, is to pose a very significant paradigm shift, if I may use that hackneyed phrase, and that is to make the private activity of teaching and learning into a public activity again. In Socratic tradition, teaching and learning took place in the marketplace, in front of the whole community. The return to an understanding that what goes on in the schools is a matter of interest to everyone in the society is one of the first principles we must adopt.

The kind of rigor that the Commissioners talk about, the demand for discipline and for better performance from our students and our staff, is the only way, I think, to validate what they are capable of. I was pleased to present the Report to my own Board because I was able to present my own report card and say to people in my jurisdiction that we are on the right track. Many of the issues that appear in the Report are issues that

we are handling in our own jurisdiction and to have them reflected in this document is a sign of respect and recognition, and I thank the Commissioners for that. Some of the more specific issues that I would like to focus on are:

School/Community Alliances

Certainly we must move towards the inclusion of parents, the larger business community, and teachers in a de-centralized governance model. But we need to look critically at what is happening in the United States and in Britain where they have moved towards de-centralization because they wanted to empower the community and the school staff. Those experiences suggest that where you do not have a larger jurisdiction such as a school district or school board adopting the policies of fairness and equity you have parents wondering what to do about students who have been thrown out of school and you have local councils that do not feel any compulsion or need to accept youngsters into the system who are disabled, or disempowered, or problematic. And so as we move towards this ideal of decentralization, I caution us to look for the balance in what we are trying to do. Those of us who have been in education for some time know that no model works and no extreme of the pendulum works.

The Report's reference to children's services and to enabling others in the community to take over the part of teachers' work for which they have not been trained and should not be responsible for delivering is tremendously important. But where does this happen? Where does the community come together in the school setting to provide the services that our children and our youth need? As a learning society, we must pay attention to the research of Dr. Fraser Mustard, especially where he talks about young children who are hungry and neglected and who suffer from ill health and how they fare in schools. We need to talk not only about the services that are available in the community, but how to centralize those services in the school setting so that children come to them through one source. We have students in our schools who are dealing with ten or fifteen professionals. They go from social worker to other custodians to doctors to lawyers — from this person to the other person. And so I challenge us to identify those

models that are working and to see whether they can be replicated. There are instances of brilliance in our communities but what has so far eluded us is how to generalize from those best practices, from community to community.

Starting School at Age Three

Start at age three? Absolutely! The research in the United States says to us that head start programs work, but what happens is as youngsters move from Head Start programs to the junior and intermediate divisions all the advantages they have gained early in their lives are lost. This is because the school system is generally not organized to continue to support youngsters. All that learning dissipates as they go through the school system and the differentiation between the haves and the have-nots becomes increasingly pronounced. But this is not an excuse to give up on youngsters. We know that in the most horrific environments there are schools and school systems and teachers where youngsters achieve, and I would challenge all of us to say that we have as high expectations for those children as those who come to us with tremendously advantaged backgrounds.

College of Teachers

I applaud the recommendations on teacher education that appear in the Report, particularly the two-year program that starts with a practical apprenticeship followed by a theoretical experience. Certainly re-certification is also tremendously important, though I don't know about compulsory staff development because I haven't seen it work. One of our greatest challenges as a profession is not to deal with the outstanding teachers of whom there are many or the very poor teachers of whom there are few, but to make sure that good teachers move towards excellence on a regular basis. And that is particularly challenging for our system. How do you go from average or good performance to outstanding performance? Whose responsibility is it to provide staff development? I'm going to be fairly hard-nosed and say that we have to move from an era of entitlement to an era of private accountability and responsibility. If we are professionals we are responsible for taking charge of our professional development. School systems

and universities and the government should provide opportunities, but the bottom line, for me, is I'm a professional because I know what I need and I will take steps to ensure that those professional needs are met.

Information Technology

My concern is that information technology will make a difference between those who have access to computers and those who have no access. Any technology can create a state of technological apartheid. Let me give you an example of a Grade 12 chemistry assignment. A third of the class has computers and are able to get on the Internet and access the best minds in the world, compared to two-thirds of the students who have no access to computers and who have to rely on going to the library for their information or have to work at night so they can survive economically. Tell me who will be able to compete for marks. And where is the equity and the fairness and the justice in all of that? Education is a moral activity, and you and I are responsible for understanding the implications and the impact of the introduction of the new technology.

Accountability

Finally, I'm absolutely certain that the issue of accountability will become increasingly important and that league tables are here, not because we like them but because in some ways we have failed to pay attention to what our public is demanding of us. And so I challenge us to find a way of transmitting information to our public in a way that is suitable to our profession, that doesn't damage children and that can convey an idea of a caring, learning society. This is not a small task, because what this report demands of us in changing to a learning society is cultural change in the deepest sense of the word. If we really want to ensure that children learn and are curious, we have to learn and be curious. We will be judged by what happens from here on in. We have a wonderful opportunity because this report has brought us together as a learning community. We have the opportunity to show that we can rise to the challenge, that we can give some meaning to these words, and that we can deliver a public school system that this province deserves.

Early Childhood Education

Investing in Young Children and Families

Is Early Childhood Education an Engine or Caboose?

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From the conception to the birth of a child, parents in Ontario are attended to, and supported by, a universal healthcare system and, frequently, by prenatal classes. From the age of four, children and their parents are supported by a universal education system. But between birth and age four, the social fabric provides a patchwork of support arrangements, and lots of families fall through, failing to deliver children who are ready to learn at school entry. Partly in response to this need, the Royal Commission on Learning made its most daring recommendations, calling for increased attention to early childhood education and earlier school entry. This bold plan pushes the previously almost invisible three-year old on to the social and educational stage. This is a major accomplishment, because if you think about it, preschoolers aren't a big ticket in our age of information, media, stakeholder accountability, and economic concerns. For example, how many roles are there for preschoolers in primetime TV? How many preschoolers did the Royal Commission talk to when they visited shopping malls to seek the opinions of youth? When business leaders think about the quality of the work force pouring out of the end of the educational pipeline, how often do they think about the physical health, social adjustment, and minds of the children entering the other end of the pipeline?

Visibility aside, why push the age of school entry down to three? For parents of preschoolers, there are obvious advantages, certainly in the case of working

parents who require full-time care. For middle-class homemaker parents, many of whom seek out nursery or regular peer experiences for their preschoolers, the option of half-day programs will also be valuable. For parents who choose not to enter their children early, the Commission report hints at other forms of support for parenting. Along with these advantages, parents are also able to bask at least momentarily in the limelight of the Commission's recognition of the important nurturance and stimulation they provide for the child during his or her time at home. Societal recognition of

The Radwanski report called for the idea in 1987, but school for three-year olds was actually underway a hundred years before.

the value of good parenting is a rare commodity, and we need to savour this flavour in the Commission's report.

Clearly the Royal Commission on Learning's recommendations are a boost for parents of preschoolers. But can society afford the price tag? The Commission's answer is that early education will be also be a boost for all children, particularly disadvantaged children, as they enter school and thus a boost for education and society in general. We know that crucial language experiences are happening or not happening before

Commission Highlights

- Voluntary full day programs for 3, 4 and 5 year olds

- Emphasis on early literacy

Government Decisions

- Phase in voluntary full day programs for 4 and 5 year olds

- Outcomes/curriculum for JK and SK
School boards to develop early literary programs

kindergarten. We know that some children come to kindergarten with social histories and attitudes which signal that they are likely to be aggressive or violent for years to come. As Dan Keating points out in his remarks, we know that purposeful, structured early intervention, stimulation, and quality care can reduce such problems. A reasonable question is, Why not target intervention to the disadvantaged? Partly because there are potential advantages for all children and parents. In this regard, the Commission cites the example of successful universal schooling for three-year olds in France. Maybe another reason for universality is that it can help to galvanize society in recognizing the benefits of acting on the needs of all young children and parents.

Given some of the initial reactions to the proposal in the media and on TVO's electronic education forum, it might be useful to recall that school for three-year olds is not new in Ontario. The Commission notes that the Radwanski report called for the idea in 1987, but school for three-year olds was actually underway a hundred years before. The 1887 *Ontario Education Act* delegated the responsibility of establishing kindergartens for three- to five-year-old children to school boards. However, kindergarten was certainly not universal and spread very slowly to the rural areas of Ontario. In the 1890s, Hester How, the first female school principal in Ontario, was allowing elementary students to bring their preschool brothers and sisters to play at the back of the classroom when the economic circumstances of the family did not allow for parental care at home (Stapleford, 1989). Just as school for three-year olds is not completely new, neither is parent participation in education. Parent education and support programs have been tried here and there for much of this century. Nevertheless, to make these supports effective and pervasive requires a sense of societal purpose that we don't currently have. Nothing less than a grassroots movement akin to the consciousness-raising around ecology or child abuse over the last decade or so would be required to overcome the issue of costs in general, professional rivalries, government entanglements, the demographics of greater numbers of pensioners resistant to tax increases to pay for education when they don't even have

children, and on and on. It's important to note that the establishment of kindergartens and creches for young children in Ontario a hundred years ago blossomed in an era of social reform which placed child welfare at the top of the social agenda (see Kieran, 1986, for an interesting review).

Having applauded the Royal Commission on Learning for endorsing the value of early childhood education in general and for a daring leap into education for

A grassroots movement akin to the consciousness-raising around ecology or child abuse would be required to overcome the issue of costs.

three-year olds, I now want to review some of the points of caution.

The first point concerns parents and families. Anything in this initiative which looks or acts anti-family, anti-parent, will doom the approach, both politically and practically. Most successful early education intervention programs involve the parents in delivering, and even in constructing, the educational goods. Giving parents political clout in school councils may be important but it won't be enough. For example, an analysis of mandated parent representation on school councils among the School Reform movement in the US found that parent representation was usually ineffective and for a variety of reasons (Fruchter, Galletta, & White, 1993). In the Royal Commission's report, how parents should be involved, beyond the political level, is not spelled out; how this is worked out, at the level of early education and beyond, will be crucial. How will working parents be drawn into the daily education of their children and the workings of the school? How will parents who choose to stay at home with their preschoolers be supported by ministries of government? Information pamphlets on effective parenting just won't do.

The second point concerns the need for flexibility and experimentation in

ways of delivering early education so that it fits local communities and contexts. For example, let's assume that there are disadvantaged children in rural farming areas as well as in cities and that there are other needs which would be met by school for three-year olds in these rural areas as well. Let's also assume that there is seasonal need for childcare by farmer-parents during the spring, summer, and fall months, but not during the winter. Could school for three-year olds, and other young children, have a winter school holiday instead of a summer holiday? This may or may not be something farming communities would want, but could this kind of flexibility be entertained?

The third point is that while we're talking about new things, there is a need for evaluation and analysis of the new approaches. I understand that pilot programs may begin this fall in a number of boards. How will lessons be learned from these trials? How will they be evaluated? Will someone be listening to the voices of young children as well as the older stakeholders?

The fourth point is to admit there are huge practical issues to be dealt with in providing school for three-year olds. Some of these were raised by the Commission itself. Clearly its members knew that what they were proposing would not be easy. As a concrete example, do schools have the kind of physical space that can be converted into areas that will support the needs of young children? Even more important, how will early education be staffed? Who will train the professionals working with the children? Happily some preliminary work has already been done on training issues for early educators by at least two Ontario groups, the Early Childhood Teacher Education Consortium (ECTEC) and the Teacher Education Council of Ontario (TECO). TECO's report proposed a collaborative approach, combining elements from ECE programs in the community colleges, university undergraduate courses, and faculties of education. Although this approach of combining existing elements makes sense, it might be time for an even more fundamental re-examination of the possibilities for professional training and staffing. European models, for example in Germany and France, are quite different (see McMahan, 1992).

A fifth concern is that the proposal of school for three-year olds may promise too much for the disadvantaged children of the province. As the analyses of Head Start programs in the US show, early intervention can definitely get children ready for school but it can't inoculate them against damaging environments that persist through later childhood (Zigler & Styfco, 1994). In this light, a sensible question is, Why do this if we're not simultaneously addressing other problems such as family poverty? The answer is that this is a huge first step and that it builds on the universal community institution of the school.

Finally, I believe that the great danger in the Commission's recommendation of earlier school entry is that the furor over this leap could lead to neglect of the support and improvement of Ontario's current kindergarten classrooms (see Corter & Park, 1993). Thus the issue of improving professional training will continue to be crucial even if the hope of earlier entry is postponed or discarded, as will the need to bring new knowledge about

child development to the professional community. Other issues will also continue to demand attention in kindergartens. Among these are: the frequent isolation of kindergartens in the school system; the relative isolation from parents; the need to connect community goals and the goals of the kindergarten classroom; the importance of increasing the recognition of the educational value of kindergarten among the public and even among educators; and finally, the need to preserve the high level of care and nurturance, balanced with appropriate challenge, currently provided in many of our kindergartens. Many kindergarten teachers and early childhood educators are already working very hard to accomplish the important tasks of early education which the Royal Commission describes. They deserve recognition for this important work and support in exploring new ways of caring for and educating young children and working with their parents.

The points of caution listed above are not meant to dampen enthusiasm for

investing in young children and families. They are simply meant to gird us for some of the realities as we try to move forward on the train of thought provided by the Royal Commission on Learning. And if we don't move early childhood education to the front of the train? We all know what's become of cabooses ...

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Society's Role in the Development of Young Children

Weighing the Research Evidence

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One of the most important and controversial recommendations of Ontario's Royal Commission on Learning is the Commission's proposal to make schooling available for three-year olds. The Canadian Institute for Advanced Research, through its programs in human development and population health, has explored many of

the issues pertinent to this recommendation (Keating, 1993; Keating & Mustard, 1993). On the basis of that work, it seems clear that this is an important and welcome initiative but one whose value will be realized only if the fundamental developmental needs of young children remain in the forefront during implementation of the recommendation (Keating, in press-a, in press-c). Two broad types of research evidence are central for understanding the importance of this initiative: the critical role of early childhood for lifelong development and the technological, economic,

and social changes that have disrupted established social mechanisms for providing the necessary care.

Early Childhood Is a Critical Period for Lifelong Development

The first set of evidence deals with early childhood as a critical or sensitive phase of development, during which patterns of perceiving, knowing, learning, and interacting with others are laid down, with lifelong consequences (Carnegie Corporation, 1993; Keating, in press-c; Task Force on Human Development, 1992). We know that fundamental patterns of brain structure and function are established in infancy and early childhood, and these patterns are shaped by the child's experience during these critical periods.

In addition to the biological mechanisms, about which we are gaining knowledge quite rapidly, we also have evidence on the long-term consequences of differential quality in the social and physical environment. The increased risk for a range of behavioural problems attributable to non-nurturing, chaotic, or unstimulating

early environments is substantial. We also know that for high-risk populations, high-quality interventions can reduce the incidence of a range of negative life outcomes. On the positive side, there is evidence to suggest that high-quality social environments early in life enhance the long-term prospects for good health, coping, and competence (Keating, in press-c; Task Force on Human Development, 1992). The cumulative weight of evidence clearly identifies early childhood as a critical developmental period, with lifelong consequences.

Social and Economic Changes: Pressure on the Care of Young Children

The second type of evidence addresses how well we are doing as a society in providing nurturing caregiving environments for young children, in the face of the dramatic social, technological, and economic changes that we confront. Here, the evidence is sobering. Many families lack the fiscal or time resources to provide the quality of care that they would choose for their young children. Many of them require alternative care arrangements, due to economic and/or career obligations.

National studies have shown that it is not just children of poverty who are at risk in this regard; the stress of arranging stable and suitable child care affects families of all social classes and backgrounds (Lero, Goelman, Pence, Brockman, & Nuttall, 1994; Task Force on Human Development, 1992).

In addition, dramatic changes in family constellation have compromised some traditional methods of providing high-quality care. The strains on single parents and the dispersion of extended families who can offer a broader base of support are two examples of these trends. These broad social and economic changes are likely to accelerate rather than diminish, and thus our capacity to sustain or renew high-quality supports for child development will remain a challenge for the foreseeable future (Keating, in press-b; Keating & Mustard, 1993).

Many families, of course, remain able to provide high-quality care either directly or in formal or informal settings, and it is important to recognize their continued right to do so. The existence of high-quality care in the public domain can

only add to our societal resources for this important task.

Research Supports an Early Childhood Initiative

These two broad conclusions — early childhood is a critical period and rapid social change is reducing our ability to provide adequate supports for development during that critical period — are

National studies have shown that it is not just children of poverty who are at risk in this regard; the stress of arranging stable and suitable child care affects families of all social classes and backgrounds.

well supported by the scientific literature. Taken together, they suggest that a new initiative in this area is both timely and well-supported by the best available research.

Effective Implementation of the Initiative

A number of factors are central to the effective implementation of this initiative. Among these key factors:

1. The effort in early childhood education needs to be conceptualized as support for healthy and competent child development rather than as a reduced age for introducing formal academic instruction. Viewed in this light, we should seek to design experiences that research evidence has identified as fundamental to optimal development. Both basic and applied research are important in this design process, and the diverse expertise available from many sources should be welcomed and used. In all cases, however, the maintenance of a developmental perspective is essential (Keating, in press-c). In particular, an overly narrow,

academic focus at this age range would be inappropriate.

2. This initiative needs to be seen as a community-wide effort rather than as the possession of a single professional group, ministry, or bureaucracy. Co-operation and co-ordination of these efforts across all relevant sectors of society are essential and likely to work best at the community level (Keating, in press-b). While recognizing the legitimate needs and aspirations of the many talented professionals already working in this field, we need as a society to ensure that adversarial positions between different groups do not drive this agenda.

3. As a community initiative, there needs to be sufficient scope for diverse arrangements appropriate to each community. The plan for a rural school board is necessarily different from the one designed to work in Metro. Differences among communities in the particular blend of professionals and volunteers, for example, should be anticipated. In general, it is crucial not to confuse the notion of universality with that of uniformity.

4. We should be alert to creative opportunities to engage the broader community in the provision of child care. High school students, for example, could become a rich source of adult help in child care, through co-operative education or community service programs. Tying this in with school work on human development or family studies would amplify society's future nurturing potential. Similarly, the striking success of pilot programs to obtain volunteer expertise from older citizens should be noted and included in the implementation planning.

5. We need to monitor carefully how the initiative is working, so that we can make adjustments to assure the highest possible quality in all circumstances. We should monitor key developmental outcomes, as well as user or provider satisfaction. Another key criterion should be how well the initiative is being implemented in terms of community co-ordination. This is an important opportunity to renew Canadian society for the next century (O'Neill, 1994; Putnam, 1992).

6. There is much to be said for, and little

against, the universal nature of the program. In particular, there is the solid evidence that difficulties exist in providing high-quality care throughout all social classes, not just those that might be targeted by income or employment criteria.

Objections to the Initiative in Early Childhood Education

A number of objections have been raised in response to the Royal Commission's initiative, and it is important to examine them thoughtfully.

1. "It costs too much." Certainly additional debate on where the resources may come from for this important initiative will go on for some time. The Commission has identified some possible sources, and others have argued that a deployment of current resources may well be adequate to support the initiative.

In any cost/benefit analysis, however, the benefit side of the equation is equally important. Regarding this initiative, two types of benefits are substantial. One lies in the savings on special services not needed later in development, among those high-risk children who have had the benefit of a high-quality early intervention. These appear to be quite large in some cases.

A second benefit lies in the increased potential for economic growth and prosperity that lies in the development of broader population competence, especially in the new knowledge-driven economies.

2. "Being stuck in school is wrong for three-year-olds; they should be out play-

ing." As noted above, if we have a traditional classroom model applied to early education, this would be a concern. We need to ensure that these programs function as high-quality *child development centres* which attend to the full range of developmental needs.

3. "Families should make their own arrangements; this just isn't a legitimate public concern." The evidence on where many young children actually receive care suggests that many families, in all social classes, are unable to provide high-quality care due to work and/or school schedules, the economic necessity of two parents, or a single parent, working, and other factors (Ross, 1993).

There is a legitimate public interest in supporting early child development, because of its strong links to subsequent population health and competence. Blaming families for having to cope with stress is not only inappropriate but fails to address the core problem of how we can ensure high-quality arrangements for all of society's children.

4. "Children should not be forced out of their homes and into school so young." Indeed, they should not, and there is nothing in the recommendations or the public discussion to indicate any intention to move to compulsory participation.

5. "Some families will take advantage of the system as free baby-sitting." Although this may indeed occur, we need to focus on the developmental needs of the young children in such settings. As a society, we all benefit from attending to the needs of

healthy and competent development and we all suffer the consequences when those needs are not met.

Conclusion

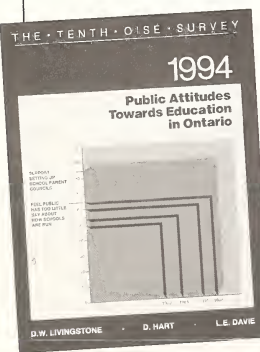
The research evidence suggests that the early childhood initiative is valuable and timely. In the implementation of the initiative, key developmental factors must remain paramount. We will need to learn as we proceed, which is, in fact, a hallmark of the learning society (Keating, 1995).

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This survey covers issues of educational funding, school governance, educational inequalities, curricular policy choices for the schools and community colleges, participation in adult education, and uses of the emerging information highway. There is a special focus on the public's perceptions of relations between education and the workplace, and on preferred education-work linkage policies

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Supporting Healthy Child Development

The Need for Community Connections

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The synergy between the work we have been involved in at the Premier's Council¹ in the creation of our report, *Yours, Mine and Ours: Ontario's Children and Youth*, and the Royal Commission's report *For the Love of Learning* may be a surprise to some, but to me it is a sign that perhaps we are starting to get it right. We are starting to view children within all of the environments in which they interact, and at last, we are bringing together all of the pieces of the puzzle of what children need in order to learn and develop fully.

A major project of the Premier's Council over the last three years has dealt with healthy child development. We have asked ourselves, of all that we could do to support healthy child development and the raising of the next generation, what are the most important things to do? What can we do that is amenable to public policy influence? Who needs to be involved? Can we measure our results?

In our efforts to come to grips with these questions, we realized we could not adequately address them without a consideration of the school environment and the role it plays in supporting and promoting the healthy development of children and youth. And so even though the mandates, or starting points, of the Council and the Royal Commission are different, I think our independent processes have led us to the inter-connections that exist. In asking what all kids need for healthy development and what all kids need to learn, we find our common ground.

The Commission discovered, as we did, that when you put the needs of children and their healthy development at

the centre of the discussion, it becomes clear that we are not using the resources we currently have to best effect, nor have we tapped into all that we could be using. The Commission concluded, as we did, that no one sector can do it all, or for that matter, even do its own job well, without the support of all the other players and service systems in a child's life. The connections between home and school, between the systems of support within the community (the health, social service, and recreation systems), and the inter-connections between the policies and funding practices of the various ministries must be brought together.

The recommendations of both reports

The Commission concluded, as we did, that no one sector can do it all, or for that matter, even do its own job well, without the support of all the other players.

reinforce one another, and their impact will be cumulative. We know we must start early — from before birth and onward — to promote health and we know we must support and nurture healthy development all through the transitions into adulthood. Our approach to healthy development must no longer be fragmented by barriers among service systems, schools, and other community institutions. Communities must come together differently — as whole communities for whole children rather than as a

series of interest groups — if we are to achieve our common goal. It is the establishment of what we have called “community connections” that can make the difference. In its report, the Royal Commission has suggested processes and mechanisms for achieving such community connections.

Before discussing some of the specific recommendations, I want to comment on the significant impact broader consultation had in both reports. It may explain why there has been a resonance, a sense on the part of the public and others that we are on the right track. We found, as did the Commission, that by and large all parents hold a common aspiration for their children and that their dream is not a limited one, but is inclusive of good health, strong relationships, a sense of belonging, and doing well in school. For this aspiration to be realized, all of us — communities, schools, business, parents, and others — will have to be involved.

Readiness Program

First, despite some of the media hype in portraying this as “three-year olds going to school” and all of the images that this implies, including “detentions for napping,” what this recommendation reflects is our understanding of the value that good, early school-readiness programs have in the overall development of children, including their ultimate success as adults.

Currently, 70 percent of all preschool children in the province are in non-parental care arrangements. Some are already in excellent preschool programs. But not enough, and not necessarily the children with the greatest need.

This recommendation echoes our call in *Yours, Mine and Ours* for a range of quality child care and early childhood education services to be available on an equitable basis in every community across the province.

But we are not starting from scratch! Building on what currently exists for preschoolers, we must identify those communities most in need and remove the unnecessary barriers between early childhood educators, service providers, and schools. This can only be done from the premise that all of us can learn from the experiences and training of others involved in providing support and education to children. I believe that much can be done to develop a comprehensive net-

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work that ties child care, parent-support programs, preschool programs, and kindergarten programs together in a continuum of services.

Achieving this will require that all four engines discussed in the Commission's Report — early childhood, involvement with communities, teacher education, and technology — work together. It will also mean that implementation, the mix of professionals, and the sites for service will vary from community to community depending on the local partnerships and resource base.

Using what we already have as a starting point — and asking what makes sense for the kids and how their day is arranged — we will discover new ways of working together that can be tried and tested.

At the *community level*, alliances between schools and the current set of early child supports will need to be made. At the *provincial level*, flexibility, cross-ministry collaboration, and the removing of regulatory barriers will be needed.

Community Councils

In *Yours, Mine and Ours*, we called for "schools for the community." This essentially was a call to bring together the resources available in every neighbourhood and community to address the non-academic areas of children's lives. It was a recognition that while it is good that we have a collective concern for the hours a child is in school, the ten months of the year a child is engaged in an educational activity, this must be expanded to include a concern for those non-academic times. We need to consider those before- and after-school hours, those months when a child is not in school. And that concern must be borne by the whole community, not just by the school or the parents alone.

We envisioned before- and after-school programs, counselling and mentoring programs on site, recreation programs taking place in schools all year for all kids — that schools would truly be a resource and a focal point of communities.

To make this work — without frustrating parents, teachers, and local service providers — there must be "mirroring efforts" and mechanisms put in place at the provincial level to address the policy implications, funding barriers, and integration issues that will emerge as innovative, cross-sectoral approaches are identified.

But we should not underestimate what this "re-engineering of the community" entails. It involves a sharing of decision making and of power. The good news is that many communities have already undertaken the challenge, often in spite of current regulations and policies. What is needed is the same effort at all levels.

The community councils called for in the Commission Report are a mechanism for bringing community members, parents, youth, teachers, and others together to consider all parts of a child's day and to broker all the resources of the community in supporting the role of the school and of parents.

Service Requirement

As just discussed, one of the themes of the Royal Commission Report is to bring the community and all of its resources into the school. By requiring students to involve themselves in the community in which they live, the Commission is suggesting that we also need to bring the school out into the community. Building communities, forming relationships, and ensuring a sense of belonging are part of what we all need for health.

Acting on this recommendation will do a lot to foster the skills — both social as well as employment — needed by all young people. It will contribute to the development of citizenship skills and will reinforce our common obligations as members of a community to be involved, to give something back, to help others.

I want to end where I began — with a focus on community connections and an understanding that for teachers and the school system to accomplish their primary mandate for learning, and for parents and the community to accomplish our collective mandate for healthy, connected, and productive citizens, we need to bring all of our resources together by building the bridges required. I believe we can do this if at all levels we put the healthy development of our children and youth at the centre and work out from there.

NOTE

1. The Premier's Council was a non-partisan, advisory body to Government, chaired by the Premier, whose membership consisted of cabinet ministers, academics, teachers, business leaders, and others.

Parental and Community Involvement

"What's Love Got to Do With It?"

The Commission's Approach to Community Education

KARI DEHLI

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Commission Highlights

- School-community councils to link school to community more closely (including strengthening parent involvement with own children's learning)

- Statements of parents' rights and students' rights

Government Decisions

- Parents-majority school councils to advise on school-related issues

- Statements of parents' rights and students' rights to be developed

In a lengthy discussion on parents and community, the Commission designates "community education" as the first of its four engines of growth. The Report insists that there is a need for greater collaboration among schools, families, and communities. Teachers and principals are advised to take cultural and religious diversity, as well as economic and family hardships, into account in their work with children and to think of parents as partners in children's learning. We find discussions of parenting skills, communication, accountability and shared responsibility, and a thoughtful review of some of the literature that links parental support of children's learning to their school achievement.

Much of this discussion is interesting and it puts forward some good arguments for more collaboration among schools, families, and communities. Nevertheless, there are also some missing elements and some worrisome implications in light of current attempts to reduce public sector spending. With the exception of the important proposals to offer early childhood education programs from age three onwards, the discussion on parenting and community is translated into only a few recommendations that seem either confusing or superficial.¹ Most important, there is no serious discussion of the power relations that pervade and divide schools, families, communities, and the wider society.

While the Report does attend to the effects of inequality, poverty, racism, and

sexism on children and families, these are seen as forces external to schooling, as forces and changes to which schools must adjust or for which they must compensate. The Report does not seriously examine how schools themselves, despite the good intentions of many teachers, participate in reproducing power relations and maintaining social inequality. Its discussion of initiatives to address equity in schools is a case in point. It is taken up as a matter of communication, accommodation, and inclusion, while questions of power are barely touched upon. Furthermore, by grouping together the concerns of "religious minorities," "language, ethno-cultural, and racial minorities," the Report is unable to focus in any substantive and constructive way on how different forms of inequity are produced and particularly on how schools perpetuate systemic racism.

In this context, the recommendations about community education reiterate a nostalgic yearning for local harmony found in many previous reports. At worst, the recommendations around parent involvement, participation, and school-community councils (see recommendations 4, 108–114, 139, 141, 142, 150–153) comprise a significant setback compared to policies and practices already implemented in some boards and schools. For example, there are several recommendations that would devolve decision making from elected school boards to appointed school principals, but little that would allow a broad range of parents — and not just those in two-parent, middle-class, and single-income families — to have a voice in school decision-making. Those community groups and teachers who for many years have argued for more local, democratic deci-

sion-making in schools, for greater equity, and for the empowerment of classroom teachers, students, and parents must be disappointed with what they are offered here. If anyone is being "empowered" in these recommendations, it is the Ministry of Education and Training, which will gain far greater powers in curriculum and standard setting, and local school principals, who will gain greater powers over school budgeting. In addition, within the guise of community-school councils, partnerships, accountability, and community education, private corporations and middle-class parents will be provided with wider avenues to influence schooling.

Parenting and Early Childhood Education

The Report has many interesting things to say about parents and their roles and responsibilities in children's learning. The Commission recognizes that poverty, racism, sexism, and violence constitute persistent barriers to health, well-being, and educational achievement and equity for many children and adults. They argue that school reforms will have minimal effect as long as these conditions persist. None of the recommendations, with the exception of the early childhood education proposals, speaks directly to these broader issues, however. Rather the focus seems to be on teaching parents how to be better parents by providing them with informative brochures and videos, and on finding ways to get parents to become more involved in educational activities, at home and in the school. The Commissioners outline a vision of children as learners from birth to adulthood and they redefine parenting as a form of pedagogy, focussed on what they call "curriculum of the home" or "school readiness." The idea here seems to be that parents should frame their interactions with children in relation to school learning and school behaviour, long before they actually enter that institution. While children are entitled to good parenting, I wonder about the wisdom of holding up adjustment to the priorities and social relations of schools as the ultimate measure of good parenting.

The proposal for an optional early childhood education program beginning at age three is framed in terms of "school readiness." Indeed, the Commissioners propose that a separate set of curricula,

learning outcomes, and assessment strategies be developed for use with the three- to five-year olds in these programs. Again, I am puzzled about the implications of orienting young children so strongly towards later adaptation to school learning and school behaviour.

In spite of these reservations, the recommendations for early childhood education could be a real benefit, not just for children but for parents, especially working mothers. But there could also be

The recommendations about community education reiterate a nostalgic yearning for local harmony found in many previous reports.

many obstacles. Staffing could become a major hurdle, since there are two groups of differently trained and paid workers who now work as educators of young children. Both groups have good qualifications, but while ECE-trained staff working in childcare centres are paid close to the minimum wage, JK-primary teachers with teaching certificates are on the teachers' salary grid, represented by a teachers' union. The language in the report suggests that ECE programs and workers with ECE certificates will "phase in" as junior kindergarten-primary programs "phase out." Would these two groups of staff work together in the same programs, with one group supervising and administering the other? If and when early childhood education is made available to three-year olds in schools where local principals manage tight budgets, will they be able to allocate funds and compose the staff of their ECE programs as they see fit? Beyond general statements about how schools will require "differential staffing" models, the Report provides few clues about how to resolve these difficult issues.

The Report draws on research which concludes that "good parenting" can make a critical difference in children's

success in school. The Commissioners recommend strategies that are meant to improve parents' ability to take an active and productive part in children's learning, from birth onwards. In this regard, they support two views that have become a kind of common sense among educators and some policy-makers: "parents make the difference" and "children require partnerships in learning." The Report emphasizes those types of activities where parents/guardians take part in, support, and reinforce the work of teachers. Reading with children and following up on homework are mentioned as examples of useful and positive involvement.

There is indeed much research that demonstrates connections between "good" parenting and school achievement. However, this research also suggests that a wide range of factors influence parenting, and that good parenting is not, in and of itself, any kind of panacea to children's school success, nor do researchers agree on what counts as good parenting or how to evaluate it. More problematic, much of the research and much school practice take for granted that heterosexual, two-parent, middle-class, and nuclear family-forms provide the "best" environment for children. Many parenting programs aim to emulate such environments or to compensate for the supposed "lack" in families that do not "fit" this norm (for critical reviews of literature, see Dehli & Januario, 1994; Polakow, 1993).

It is not wrong to offer assistance to people who want to become better parents. But I do worry about the class, gender, racial and cultural assumptions that are often embedded in discussions about parenting and school achievement among educators and policy-makers. In this Report, I wonder about the slide from an initial recognition of structural inequality and poverty to recommendations that seek to "educate" and inform parents. This slide has at least two important effects. It diverts attention from improving the conditions in which parents parent and teachers teach, on the one hand, and it leads the Commissioners to argue for an advisory model of parental participation in school decision-making, on the other. The emphasis on individual parental education and involvement suggests, perhaps unwittingly, that parents are primarily responsible when children do not do well in school. Black and Portuguese parents in Toronto have encountered this position

over the years, as they have asked why schools continue to fail their children. Meanwhile, there is no evidence that these parents are less "involved" or concerned about education as those in other communities.

I do think that the Royal Commission is genuinely concerned with poverty and inequality. However, their discussions about parenting and shared responsibility are conducted in an economic and political context where governments seem more concerned with deficits than with unemployment and poverty, and where a moral panic is being created about the supposed disintegration of "the family," the lack of discipline and respect for authority among young people, and so on. The problem is not in the Commissioners' intentions but in the wider context in which well-meaning recommendations

on the Commission's Vision of Education. While lauding families where children and parents read together, where conflicts are reasoned out, where children and adults learn to take responsibility as individuals, he, in quick succession, moved from a lament about families that do not provide such home environments, who aren't sufficiently interested and supportive of children's learning, and who are (I quote) "speakers of another language." All in the same sentence. Are we to take from this that Mr. Caplan believes that minorities who do not speak English or French are inadequate parents and disinterested in children's schooling? I hope not.

But this line of reasoning is not unique. Historical and contemporary research shows that such views are depressingly endemic to North American education policy and school systems. In practice, what it says is that if only "those families" — and implicitly "those women" — would improve their parenting and home environments, teachers wouldn't have to deal with so many children who aren't "ready" for school, nor would they have to tackle so many "extra" social problems that deviate from the central mission of the school, namely academic learning. This is very dangerous talk. It is the kind of talk that slides into victim-blaming, away from collaborative efforts and shared decision-making about children's education.

Parental Participation in School Decision-Making

The second consequence of favouring individual partnerships with parents is a form of school-community council along the lines of a co-ordinated social service model: an advisory council selected by local principals. These councils will include not only parents, but members of local organizations and businesses as well; a model that is somewhat similar to the school governing bodies introduced by the Tories in England and Wales. Rather than meaningful local democracy, where parents, students, and classroom teachers could have a real input, researchers in England have shown that such councils tend to privilege white, middle-class, and professional participants, and that the knowledge of male business representatives is valued while women's knowledge as mothers and childcare workers is ignored (Brehony &

Deem, 1995; Troyna, 1994). If schools in Ontario move closer to a site-based system of management — and if local school councils are meant to carry out monitoring functions with respect to academic and fiscal "performance" — then I fear that these councils will move even further from any democratic aim the Commissioners may hold.

For the Love of Learning discusses parental involvement in the context of children's school achievement. The Commissioners are cautious about collective, democratic, and empowering models of shared decision-making with parents. They hesitate about providing real power to these councils because they cannot find any research that "proves" its benefits on children's learning. It is not surprising that it is difficult to measure direct "results" from shared, democratic decision-making in terms of children's school performance. Most schools in North America are run in a hierarchical manner. In some instances (for example in Chicago) initiatives to "empower" parents have been introduced in contexts of conflict and resistance on the part of administrators and teachers, often fuelled by institutional racism and classism and years of exclusion and discrimination. Moreover, as was the case in Chicago, the move to grant parents a substantive voice in decision making was made at a time when the school system there was virtually bankrupt, both economically and politically (Hess, 1992). To expect immediate results in terms of school achievement seems unrealistic at best. Moreover, the search for measurable effects on student outcomes from parent participation in decision making rings a little hollow when the Commissioners nevertheless recommend a shift to site-based management and a reduction in the powers of elected school boards, without much research to "prove" the direct impact of such reforms on children's learning.

Some Ontario school boards have already developed important local mechanisms for more shared and democratic decision-making in schools, and these could provide the Commission with important models and lessons. The Toronto Board of Education is one of these. Almost 20 years ago, that Board was pushed to create a School-Community Relations Department to mobilize and empower groups of inner-city, working-class, and minority parents. For a number of years, groups of inner-city

The problem is not in the Commissioners' intentions but in the wider context in which well-meaning recommendations are being read and acted upon.

about "shared responsibility" between parents, communities, and schools are being read and acted upon. They could become an excuse for blaming parents in general and families who live in difficult material and social conditions in particular. Moreover, and this does seem to be the Commissioners' intention, their proposals accept and seek to accommodate schools to the "reality" of cuts to public-sector spending, by encouraging greater use of volunteers and better co-ordination between schools and the so-called voluntary social service and health sector.

I want to mention one example to suggest how quickly and easily public debates about connections between parenting and schooling can slide into talk coded in terms of race, ethnicity, and class, even when speakers have good intentions. Gerald Caplan spoke on the first panel of the OISE/UT Forum Series

parents organized successfully, often in alliances with teachers, to prevent teacher lay-offs, to introduce anti-racist policies and heritage language programs. The Board introduced school-staffing committees and principal-selection procedures with parent and teacher involvement. The SCR Department and the school-community groups they helped to organize did not achieve all their goals, but some positive changes were beginning to take place before a conservative majority of trustees voted to abolish the Department in the mid-1980s.

A while ago, I conducted a research project with Ilda Januario, a researcher at OISE, with about 25 men and women who have been very actively involved in school-community organizing in Toronto over several years (Dehli & Januario, 1994). They were leaders of some of those organizations I have just described. Their accounts of many years of struggle to gain respect for their communities and

their children, and to improve the quality of education in Toronto, suggest that schools need something more than improved communication between families and schools or advisory councils for principals. They told us about having to undo the effects of daily and "common-sense" racism, classism, and sexism on their children and the effects of their own exclusion, and the exclusion of their communities' lives and histories, from the school curriculum. They argued strongly that parent and community participation in local school governance should be framed as a question of equity, empowerment, and local democracy, as well as a matter of quality and accountability. In order to achieve greater equity in parental participation and children's learning, it is therefore essential that boards employ community workers and that one of their primary responsibilities be to hold schools and principals accountable to equity objectives. What

made the SCR Department in Toronto effective was that it was co-ordinated at the board level, its main objectives were concerned with equity, and its staff was directly accountable to the board, rather than to local principals. Moreover, the Toronto experience demonstrates that local school democracy does not necessarily imply a weakened board of education. Indeed, elected boards continue to be crucial to ensure equitable distribution of resources, to negotiate collective agreements, and to hold schools accountable for implementing provincial policies (including equity policies).

The school-community council as proposed by the Commission is a model which empowers principals (although many may dread this "extra" task) while seemingly ignoring the unequal resources available in different communities, as well as the different issues and needs facing children and parents when they encounter Ontario schools. The Commission offers a vague recommendation that schools employ non-teaching staff to support principals in their community-relations work. This model will not alter the relations of power in local schools and communities nor will it provide resources to enable marginalized and excluded groups of parents to participate in decisions about their children's education.

Gender Equity?

There is a strange lack in the sections of the Report dealing with parenting and parental involvement. In the accounts of how important it is to read with children, to take an interest in their homework, and to follow up on teachers' initiatives, the figure responsible for this work is the gender-neutral "parent." In an ideal world, we could imagine that the work of parenting is shared. But in the world where most Ontario children live, women continue to have the practical and daily responsibility for the work of parenting, regardless of family form or participation in wage-labour. In spite of women's growing participation in the labour force, the gender division of child-rearing labour persists. More families consist of single women and children, and more children live in poverty. The Report cites research reports which contain such information.

The language on parenting and parental involvement is gender-neutral,



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even though the effects of recommendations about parenting and parental involvement will have very different consequences for women and men. Moreover, they will not affect all women in a similar way. While some women are able to employ domestics or nannies to carry out much of their parenting work, others work long hours, many in casual and low-paid jobs to support their children. Such conditions influence how women can be "involved" in children's schooling. In spite of important changes and variations in family structure and labour-market participation, women continue to be expected to do all kinds of "school-work": as home tutors, as unpaid school volunteers, or as low-paid, non-teaching staff in the new school-community centres that the Commission has in mind.

In light (again) of the current efforts by all levels of government to reduce public sector spending by cutting women's jobs and programs that have enabled women to enter the labour market, a more cynical reader of the Report could interpret its discussion of how "society expects too much" of schools as a call to women to "return to the family" in order to take up the responsibilities they have "neglected" while pursuing paid work.

Consensus-Building: What's Love Got to Do with It?

There can be little doubt that consensus-building is what the provincial government had in mind when it formed the Royal Commission on Learning 20 months ago. As one of the least popular governments in public memory, it desperately needed something that could build consensus. What better area than education? What better than a Commission that could find ways to bring together constituencies that had loudly criticized the government, such as teachers' federations, school boards, employers, and parents' groups?

Up until this week (February 10), it seemed that the Royal Commission on Learning was going to be a spectacular success in building consensus. Now, however, the critics are coming forward as the government is beginning to translate recommendations into implementation.

Any consensus-building exercise glosses over the enormous differences in material conditions and social circum-

stances in which children live and learn. Moreover, the assumption that consensus on the "main" issues has in fact been reached can lead decision-makers in education to "forget" huge and important variation in views, opinions, experience, needs, and interests. It could suggest that questions about power and politics are no longer worth arguing about. From

Love has featured in talk and writing about education and schools for a very long time.

now on, the "real game" is about implementation and administration, technical and managerial stuff, means rather than ends. This might be one reason why the Commissioners, in the end, decided to leave education decision-making in the hands of "experts," particularly principals and those working in the Ministry of Education and Training. This might be one reason why they chose to remove powers from elected schoolboards, while delegating more authority to non-elected school principals. This might be why they shy away from recommendations that would grant parents and local communities real and meaningful influence in children's education.

Finally and more dangerous, in midst of the warm and fuzzy talk about community, consensus, and partnership, the Commission also opens up a far greater involvement by corporations or "business" in all aspects of schooling. The Commissioners seem to worry that parents would only be interested in their own children (and thus a source of divisiveness or single interests?), while the interests of business are shared by the community as a whole. Thus, while the rhetoric about parental involvement is extensive, the recommendations that would enable and encourage business to frame curriculum content, provide resources, and even assist in teaching, are far more specific and concrete.

I want to conclude my remarks by talking a little about the title of the Royal Commission's report, *For the Love of Learning*. I am puzzled by the possible meanings attached to talking about edu-

cation reform in the name of love at this time. Love has featured in talk and writing about education and schools for a very long time and been used rhetorically and practically to justify very contradictory policies and practices. In the mid-19th century, parents were told that they didn't love their children enough and that teachers could do it better. Teachers, on the other hand, were told that if they only learned how to love and nurture children as a wise and maternal mother would, all of their young charges would blossom into happy and competent adults. Over the years, when teachers have sought to improve their wages and working conditions, or when they have resisted "reforms" such as those proposed in this Report, they have been told that their actions betray self-interest, rather than love and dedication to children. In the 1930s, child psychologists were telling mothers that they loved their children too much, while education philosophers have written innumerable volumes defending learning "for the love of it," attempting to rescue education from those who value only its vocational and instrumental aspects.

The trope of love can be mobilized to support all kinds of educational ends, some in pursuit of genuine solidarity and justice, others as an ideological ruse to invite people to consent to inequality. In the coming weeks and months we might begin to see more clearly "what love has to do with it" this time around.

NOTE

1. As the most costly part of the Commission Report, it is perhaps not surprising that the government decided not to move on all the ECE recommendations. With the strong likelihood that the Tories or Liberals will form the next government, it seems highly unlikely that universal ECE programs for three-year olds will be a reality in the foreseeable future.

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Building School Councils

The Need for a Balanced Approach

STAN PEARL

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The Report as a whole and the comments of my colleagues have ignited some exciting visions for me. Just imagine the humanizing effect of having early childhood education centres in our community high schools. Adults who have not yet completed high school could go to classes where their toddlers were being taught. Parenting classes could be held for all students. Students in family studies and co-operative education courses could work in the ECE centres as part of their apprenticeship. It is amazing how the uncaring veneer of

The Report implies that we are going to have to tap a vast reservoir of good will, but it offers hope in dealing with complex societal problems.

most adolescents fades when they are faced with a three-year old who is struggling to tie shoe laces.

I am supportive of the tone, direction, and goals of the Report. I think it is a uniquely Canadian document in that it responds to what it sees as valid criticism. The Report implies that we are going to have to tap a vast reservoir of good will, but it offers hope in dealing with complex societal problems.

As I read the report and considered

each of the recommendations, in many cases my first reaction was: "right!" "definitely!" "terrific!" and then I quickly followed with "the politicians won't buy that one," "not enough money," "politically unwise," "won't be accepted by the federations," "won't sell outside Metro," "won't sell in Metro." My optimism is at least somewhat modified by my 30 years' experience as a teacher, department head, vice-principal, and principal in a variety of urban high schools.

Schools and the Community

The Commission's conclusion that the schools are not sufficiently open to parents and the general community is a disappointment for those of us who have spent many years trying to involve parents and the community in a meaningful way. Some practitioners, especially at the secondary level, feel that most parents and students don't want more parental involvement, yet we all have seen the grins of accomplishment when parents, students, and community are able to work together on a common project. I think the community-school council will be a very useful mechanism for opening up schools as well as for achieving many of the goals of the Report.

Having parents, students, teachers, and representatives from local ethnic communities and businesses on the committee will bring an incredible pool of talent for the use of our schools. Being presently involved on a management board and community council, I can tell you that the process of establishing membership and mandate is not an easy one. But I can also tell you that the advantages of having so many constituencies on your side are very significant.

A group that I suggest be added to the list of potential categories for membership would be alumni. I think this group

has been highly under-used in the public system. In most cases, they are very proud of their past association with public schools and could bring significant resources with them.

I think the Commission went a long way to dispel the issue of decision making as an obstacle to the reform and I quote, "We conceive of the Community Council as an essential underpinning or resource in aiding principals in the determination of the kind of alliances and resources available in a given community." A danger that I am wary of is that when we open up the schools to the community we are vulnerable to takeover by special-interest groups. An important

A danger that I am wary of is that when we open up the schools to the community we are vulnerable to takeover by special-interest groups.

council function will be to educate council members to see their roles not only as representing particular segments of the community but also as taking responsibility for goals to benefit the common good.

The Learning Partnership is a terrific example of how business and education can be brought together for the benefit of all. In existence for less than two years, it brings hundreds of corporations, small businesses, boards of education, and universities together to find ways to promote public education. This past summer, I attended a workshop sponsored by the Partnership. The workshop was similar to many I had attended with other educators, but the advantage of having teachers, managers, principals, and corporate vice-presidents working together added a dimension to our learning that had long been missing. Gordon Cressy, President of the Learning Partnership, recently visited the state of Kentucky. According to Gordon, in comparison to what he saw there, we have just scratched the surface

in Ontario. He saw examples of corporations and small businesses funding computer programs (no strings attached) and providing the latest in computer hardware for one student in four, at both the secondary and elementary levels. These businesses have come to realize how important it is for their economically depressed communities to have technically trained and computer literate work forces if their communities and businesses are to thrive. The Commission has been quick to realize that technology can either be the "bridge" or the "barrier" when we talk about providing equity and educational opportunity for *all* our young people.

What's Left Out?

Many of us who consider ourselves to be "in the trenches" of the education system applaud the tightening of standards and the emphasis on excellence in the Report. But we think the Commission missed the boat by not highlighting the problem of violence. Violence is a serious problem that will be solved only if we use all our community resources.

Yet the Commission does provide several models for approaching the problem. If a certain city tabloid with a mass circulation of 500,000 readers had been part of a local or board community council grappling with the issue of safety in our schools, it might have been more knowledgeable about the Scarborough

this case to run a story profiling the good work of such a community enterprise, especially if they had been part of that enterprise.

Running Schools

The Commission has indicated its support for site-based management as an important concept for school governance. There would be certain curricular and financial guidelines, but the school would have much more control over its own destiny. This is a principle I endorse, but again enthusiasm should be muted with caution. A colleague of mine, the headmistress of a school in Oxford, England run by a community council, provides a cautionary tale. She was excited by the fact that she had been able to save £30,000 by doing her own sub-contracting for a renovation scheduled for the school. She had thought she would be able to use the money for program needs. Imagine her chagrin when the budget was reduced by £30,000 the following year!

Formalizing the role of students on school community councils and boards of education is also a "scary" prospect for many. All I can say is, "try it — you'll like it." Student leadership is probably our most untapped resource. Every time I have seen students given a meaningful role to play, they fulfil their responsibilities far beyond what is expected. I salute the Commission for bringing in students to be part of the "movers and shakers" of our educational community.

The Report is very clear on insisting that the principals' role will have to change:

Principals are key to the success or failure of schools. Principals can be spark plugs for efforts to foster children's growth and development by co-ordinating the services that help students. We ask principals to move out into the community both as ambassadors of goodwill and more important as agents of change. Crucial to our definition therefore will be a clear redefinition of this new dual role of school principals.

Acceptance of this new role will not come easily. Methods and content of principal training will have to change drastically. Rigid mindsets will have to be overcome. And we will have to leave principals in their schools for longer

periods than we do now or it will be impossible to build community trust and identification. This could result in teachers and heads of departments changing schools more frequently to provide the regeneration and enthusiasm often provided now by moving principals. A predictable question will be "How can we forget about the key role of the principal in providing for the safety and order of the school?" How can she or he fulfil this role if she or he is constantly out in the community? The answer is to use the community. There are schools where retirees, social workers, police officers, and business people are brought in to aid supervising activities such as study hall or cafeteria duty. As they get to know students, their role can expand to include teaching, counselling, and monitoring.

The pay-off was great because it made more time available for teachers.

Having established similar programs, I can tell you that the task of obtaining volunteers and training them took an enormous expenditure of time. The pay-off was great because it made more time available for teachers to work on program and provided a very different type of adult presence in the building.

Conclusion

At a faculty meeting the other day a few of us were complaining that there was not enough recognition of what we have done well in education. Michael Fullan quoted Steve Covey, "You can't talk your way out of a situation you behaved your way into." I thought this response was a bit harsh because we have achieved a great deal in education in recent years, but the advice to let our actions be our best public-relations vehicle is a good one.

If we are defensive, rather than being open and proactive, we will not do justice to our cause. I look forward to co-operating with the entire educational community to make our society flourish as we move into the 21st century.

Formalizing the role of students on school community councils and boards of education is also a "scary" prospect for many.

Board of Education-Metro Police experimental project to provide proactive community-based policing in four schools. Had this been the case, it seems unlikely the newspaper would have run the distorted headline, "Armed Police Patrol the Halls in Scarborough Schools." I think *The Sun* would have been more likely in

Will Councils Create Communities?

Questions for the New Regime

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The Royal Commission's recommendations (108-114) concerning the creation of school-community councils must be viewed in the context of the overall thrust of the Report as well as in their broader historical and contemporary political and economic contexts. In relation to historical debates over educational philosophies and practices, the recommendations are fundamentally conservative, especially compared to those of its predecessor, the Hall-Dennis Commission Report, *Living and Learning*. The Report itself, while very well-crafted, is marked by ambivalence and mixed messages. To cite two examples, teachers are hailed as the overworked and under-appreciated heroes of the educational enterprise only to be subjected to increased regulation and scrutiny from all quarters and to even greater demands for achievement of outcomes that may be beyond their powers to accomplish; while the local school and its "community" are designated as the key site of educational reform efforts, the Report recommends centralization of control over teacher education, curriculum, and evaluation, three cornerstones of the school system.

Given the uncertainties of our time, the Commission's ambivalence on a number of policy issues is understandable. There are no easy solutions to the problems we face, and most of them are not primarily educational ones. Increasing poverty accompanied by unprecedented concentrations of wealth, the mass destruction of jobs that used to provide people with a decent income as well as a sense of purpose and dignity, and recent moves to dismantle the welfare state in the face of the demands of the international financial "community," to

whom Canada has mortgaged its future, have undermined the foundations of our society and what is left of our faith in social progress. Given the apparent inability of federal and provincial governments to help Canadians cope with these facts of life, it is perhaps understandable that they choose to focus on education rather than on the abysmal state of the Canadian economy and the flight of resources from the public sector to the private.

While placing high hopes on new school-community alliances, the Report is rather vague on the mandate and terms of references for its proposed school-community councils.

To be fair, *For the Love of Learning* lays out a number of laudable objectives for the school system and the people it serves. Without a doubt, parental and "community" involvement in the co-ordination of education, social, and health services to meet the multiple needs of children and their parents is a highly desirable aim. Given the right combinations of people and sufficient resources, this could make a difference for many children and families. Too bad there is no money to be made available and that people in the "communities" most in need of help are so busy struggling to survive in our increasingly competitive globalized economy that they

have precious little time or energy left to serve as volunteers in their local schools. Engines of change, like other machines, require fuel, and it appears that the provincial government will be providing fuel for only one of the Report's four engines of change — information technology.

While placing high hopes on new school-community alliances, the Report is rather vague on the mandate and terms of reference for its proposed school-community councils. These are presumably to be determined, as is the selection of individuals to be members of these councils, by school principals. The text of the Report (*Making it Happen*, pp. 42-44) elaborates on the Commission's rationale for these councils:

We are proposing that ... an integrated approach to the care and nurturing of children ... requires that, together with families, a wide variety of community agencies, groups, and institutions ... *should be brought to the table through the school* so that they can determine how to best work together to support the development and learning of young people....

For schools to become effective as centres for services offered by a community in support of children, *they must be the primary agent in searching out partners who will form the community of concern. Schools must broker and cement the necessary alliances among the partners to ensure an integrated approach to the delivery of care and support for children.* [Italics added]

This is a highly optimistic vision, but how is it to be realized when neither the principals nor the councils have the financial resources or the political authority to create these alliances? Health and social service professionals answer to their own municipal and provincial bosses, not to the schools or their boards or the Ministry of Education and Training. If neither the province nor the municipalities is prepared to integrate educational, social, and health services and deliver them at the "community" level, then how are individual principals and council members to accomplish such a difficult task on their own?

The Report's lack of specificity regarding the terms of reference of the proposed school-community councils may be seen as opening up a range of possibilities. Councils might advise principals on such diverse matters as deployment of teaching staff, expenditures of

(dwindling) staff development funds, and extra-curricular (or co-curricular) program initiatives. Alternatively, the councils may be seen as having no useful function except as a communication vehicle for the school and its principal.

as both wealth and poverty escalate in parallel, this may not be as far-fetched an idea as it first appears to be.

Whichever way things go, principals will have to "manage" the councils along with all their other management responsibilities, which means that they will have less time and energy to devote to program and staff development in their schools. Based on past experience, "managing" the diversity of agendas and interests that will be represented on these councils will not be a piece of cake. It will certainly test the mettle of the majority of principals who have rarely, if ever, had to do this before; they will need all the help they can get. The Report acknowledges this and recommends that boards provide support for principals in this area (#110), but where will the resources come from as operating budgets shrink over the next several years?

Perhaps the most problematic element in the Royal Commission's school-community alliance engine is the lack of symmetry in this proposed partnership. The school is a discrete organizational entity with clearly identifiable members and a (relatively) focussed mandate; relationships among different categories of members are governed by long-established roles and traditions. But what is "the community?" In Toronto's alternative schools, the school (teachers, students, parents, staff) is the community. In so-called mainstream schools, the "community" is understood to exist outside of the school's membership, which is limited to teachers and other professional and support staff and students. This is the concept embedded in the Report and it leaves the school principal (and the rest of us) with the problem of determining the criteria for "membership" in this "community" — that is, who is in and who is out? Which categories are relevant and which are not? Where are the boundaries between the "community" served by one school and the "community" served by another in the same geographic area? What makes a collection of diverse people inhabiting a geographic area a "community"?

To put it another way, our urban and suburban population centres do not have "communities" in the same sense as small Ontario towns do. The Royal Commission would like to create such communities and includes in its Report the quotation: "It takes a whole village to

raise a child" in support of this vision. But villages, as anthropologists remind us, are bound together by ties of kinship and tradition. The Royal Commission offers an alternative cement for its proposed school-communities — a common concern for the development, education, and well-being of the children within its jurisdiction. This is a bold leap of faith to take in a society not particularly noted for its caring and support for children and their mothers.

Bold proposals often entail unintended consequences, and it is difficult to predict the future consequences of our actions, however well-intended. My fear is that the needs and lives of the children, as well as their teachers and parents, will be quickly forgotten as the new school-community councils struggle over their ill-

Will the Commission's recommendations bring more resources into the schools or will they redirect existing resources from the classroom to the new bureaucracies.

defined agendas and compete with each other for shrinking resources. The Royal Commission's recommendations have been hailed as the beginning of a "revolution" in Ontario education. In the context of the past 50 years of Ontario's educational history, it looks more like a Restoration. Will the Commission's recommendations bring more resources into the schools or will they redirect existing resources from the classroom to the new bureaucracies for testing students and regulating teachers? Will they create co-operative communities of learners or competitive bearpits of children, teachers, and parents fighting over increasingly scarce resources? Will the recommendations lead to love of learning or a paper chase for marks and credentials? As the new regime of Accountability, Assessment, and Austerity is put in place and as the provincial government hastens to lay its "New Foundations for Education" before the next election, we'll soon see.

My fear is that the needs and lives of the children, as well as their teachers and parents, will be quickly forgotten as the new school-community councils struggle over their ill-defined agendas.

Bearing in mind that even the limited powers of the principal are constrained by provincial regulations, board policies, collective agreements and, perhaps most importantly, by a further decline in discretionary resources, in the end the councils may come to function more like their traditional predecessors, the home and school associations — conducting bake sales and raffles to raise marginal dollars needed to supplement shrinking school operating budgets. This is certainly not a new function, as the Toronto Board found out several years ago when some of its alternative schools were accused of asking parents for "donations" to supplement their operating budgets. A system-wide investigation revealed that such fund-raising activities were widespread, and the issue was quickly dropped.

Given bleak financial forecasts and the reluctance of both provincial and local governments to raise taxes in order to provide the financial resources needed to "make it happen," the use of school-community councils as fund-raising bodies has considerable appeal. Of course the results are likely to be more impressive in wealthier "communities" than in poor ones, unless principals can persuade some well-connected philanthropists to "adopt-a-school" much in the way that Canadians are asked to "adopt-a-child" in the Third World. Since Canada appears to be edging towards Third World status

Technology and Learning

Information Technology

The Little Engine That Could

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I'd like to share with you 167 thoughts on the report of the Royal Commission on Learning but I will limit myself to eight. I have discovered a leit-motif to my thoughts, and hence present them for your consideration as: "Transportation Analogies in the Report of the RCOL, or Information Technology: The Little Engine That Could."

1. What a wonderful story the Report presents.

The story is exciting. It's inspirational. It presents anecdotes of heroic deeds, battles with forces of evil, a vision of a new and better world. And, like the namesake of my title, shows what is possible to achieve with effort, a little confidence ... and lots of cash.

While many of its examples of informed technology use may be somewhat pedestrian by comparison to the vanguard applications in learning in which Marlene Scardamalia and her colleagues are engaged, the goals the Report voices for technology use are inspired and inspiring in contrast to the circumstances in many Ontario classrooms today.

I like the Report. But....

2. Information technology is just one issue competing for teachers' time.

Let's keep information technology in perspective. It is the engine — actually just one engine — in the educational train. It is not the valued passenger; nor is it the destination, even when it appears as a foundation skill of the Common Curriculum.

I suspect with a few exceptions today's smaller audience is one of con-

verts to technology's potential in teaching and learning. We are likely the early adopters, sometimes incredulous of the slow rate in which our colleagues embrace a tool for more efficient learning, different learning, and better learning.

But information technology is also just one of an ever-increasing list of imperatives that "must" be addressed by teachers — retention, literacy, anti-racism education, gender equity, violence.... The train is rather full, and given competition for space in the teaming agenda of contemporary classroom life, we can't responsibly edge in our good at the expense of others.

Anyone who tells teachers that information technology will make their life easier is selling them a bill of goods. With very few exceptions — voice-mail, e-mail, and network access among them — information technology requires more work ... but the job done can be so much better.

The key to a sustained profile of information technology in a teacher's world is as value-added activity in service of the other items on the educational agenda.

3. What a big task!

Let's not underestimate the difficulty of the journey. While teacher-education candidates are entering the faculties with ever-increasing information technology acceptance and skills, thousands of practicing teachers carry baggage which hinders their ability to get aboard. Self-image of technological incompetence, fostered especially among women by the schools and the culture of our not-too distant past, can make the first step tremendously hard.

Even the outstanding success of the Creating a Culture for Change project, which has brought close to 20,000 teachers into electronic communication throughout the province, must be qualified by the recognition that four times as

Commission Highlights

A key role for information technology as an "engine of change," with recommendations about funding, professional development, partnerships, software development, and access

Government Decisions

Funding of \$500 million through partnerships with business

Education Information Technology Alliance to develop standards and plan improvements

many teachers have not joined up.

There are lots more to bring aboard before the journey ends.

4. Will teachers control the educational application of information technology?

There is another aspect to the issue of perspective. What's that light at the end of the tunnel? Our destination or the train barreling down on us? What is our point of view? Are teachers going to be in the driver's seat or on the tracks as the information technology engine speeds along?

Unless educators quickly gain the knowledge, skills, and motivation to take the lead, the burgeoning influence of commerce may wrest from us control of learning options, instructional strategies, and access to knowledge.

I don't think it coincidental that right now cash-starved, accountability-stressed trustees and directors are facing another wave of lobbying from the multinational vendors of integrated learning systems, long resisted in Canada

Report. I am amazed at how little media attention has been paid to it.

The optimist in me hopes that it's because everyone agrees with the importance of the theme and is just awaiting the Ministry's announcements on how it will implement the Commission's recommendations.

Or now that the *Globe and Mail* has Internet access, is investigative journalism reduced to accessing press releases through the Ministry gopher? (That's gopher.mcu.gov.on.ca for anyone interested.)

Subscribing to the politician's maxim "It doesn't matter what people are saying, as long as they are talking about you," I am concerned that the public benefit of the Commission's serious focus on information technology may be lost through inattention. Keep those cards and letters coming, folks.

6. Driver's Ed for Students!

Congratulations to the Commission for rehabilitating the term "computer literacy." Held in disfavor for years by most information technology-using teachers because of its association with programming in BASIC, lectures on the history of computers, and inventories of the internal parts of the engine, the Commission has redefined computer literacy more appropriately as a working knowledge of how to harness technology to obtain, analyse, organize, and publish information. The increasing transparency of computer interfaces has led to information technology tumbling from the domain of priesthood to populace. With so many people needing to drive information technology, schools must from an early age provide appropriate driver's ed.

7. Driver's Ed for Teachers!

It will come as no surprise that I highlight the Commission's conclusion that "apart from funding, adequate teacher preparation is probably the most important determinant of the success of information technology." The detail of the Report's recommendations reflects a mature approach to the teacher development issue.

Operational skills, familiarity with common productivity tools and telecommunications are specified as prerequi-

sites for entry to a teacher education program, leaving credit activity to focus on the educational use of information technology "as an integral part" of the degree program.

FEUT adopted a similar approach two years ago when it moved operational skills for those who needed to acquire them to non-credit activity early in the year and abandoned a ghettoization of information technology in a separate course, in favour of a commitment to have all courses embed information technology issues and use within the context of other course themes. Given the range of technology skills among teacher educators, we have not yet achieved the goal of seamless integration of information technology where appropriate within program. But successes suggest the merit and ultimate success of the approach.

The challenge of developing information-technology knowledge and skills in practising teachers is an even bigger task, but a project under development by The Learning Partnership may prove a model which not only achieves this information-technology goal but several others in the Commission's Report. In partnership with information-technology and other businesses, schools of teachers from Greater Toronto boards, pre-service candidates from York and U of T, and teacher educators will be provided with computers, training in their educational application, and ongoing support for a three-year period.

With more time, I'd like to talk about the issue of equity in Information Technology, about care to be taken in Internet access, but I've time for just one more quick comment.

8. In perspective again.

Information technology for teachers comes with no guarantee of improved student learning. It's just an engine. It's not time-travel ... yet.

During an Internet workshop at FEUT recently, a teacher tried to access the Canadian Passenger Rail Service item from the Ontario Science Centre's World Wide Web server. The file was not available. While this was perhaps reflective of the state of passenger trains in Canada, I hope the Commission's information technology engine does not meet the same fate.

Unless educators quickly gain the knowledge, skills, and motivation to take the lead, the burgeoning influence of commerce may wrest from us control of learning options.

by a better-educated, more-valued teaching force that in the US where ILS's have taken hold. Unless most teachers develop understanding of the range of roles information technology can play in education, they may find limiting rather than limitless models of technology use available to them.

5. "Klingons hijack IT engine"

(*Ontario Enquirer*, 26 January, 1995)

Moving to another dimension of travel, information technology is so far the "cloaked" engine of the Commission's

Teaching and Learning with Computers

Building on What Kids Like Doing

ROSEMARY CAMPBELL

IBM Canada

From three perspectives — as an employee of a major high-tech firm, as a member of the Learning Partnership, and as a parent of two grade-school daughters — I see the Royal Commission on Learning Report as the first step in really transforming how we can deliver education by focussing on two key areas: (1) teacher skills and (2) the role technology can play in the classroom. And by technology I don't just mean computers, but multimedia, software, CD-ROM's, networks, digital libraries, two-way video, and all the other tools that can play a major role in enhancing how we deliver education.

At IBM we've been involved with hundreds of projects where we've tried to implement technology in Canadian schools, some have been very successful, some have not. We've seen places where technology has helped to create equity, where it's helped schools and children who are what we call "geographically disadvantaged," or who may be physically challenged and unable to attend the classroom, by bringing educators, experts, and digital libraries from around the world to the schools. Via technology, rural schools can have access to the same information and experts as schools in the cities. Linking schools together allows them to share information, share work, share projects, and work together on projects.

We've also seen technology play a role in allowing kids to learn in multiple ways and in accordance with different learning styles. Some are visual learners, some are auditory, some are experiential, some learn better in teams, and some prefer individualized learning. Technology allows the teacher to offer a variety of different learning approaches to each to

student. It also allows teachers to give students more control and involvement in their own learning, and we all know that the more involved you are and the more you can participate, the better you learn. Technology can also open up new experiences.

As we become electronically connected, we'll have access to libraries of information previously not available. Today at IBM we're digitizing the Vatican library, for example, and information that has seldom been seen will be available to people around the world. There are all sorts of information pools that through technology are going to become available to students, teachers, and the general population.

With technology we can link to others around the world and share information

At IBM we've been involved with hundreds of projects where we've tried to implement technology in Canadian schools....

that perhaps will relieve society of some of its prejudices. We know discrimination comes from fear and lack of knowledge. We can link kids to their heritage, perhaps having students in different schools from similar backgrounds sharing information and working together.

By linking business and education, we can help share problem solving and bring relevancy into the classroom. In Toronto, for example, Ontario Hydro employees work as mentors to the students at Etobicoke Collegiate.

We can also build on something a lot

of parents don't like — the videogame skills of our kids. Whether we like it or not, kids love action: they love video and computer games; they ask for computers for Christmas. Computers had the highest increase in sales of any toy or product bought over the Christmas season in 1994. Children ask for games like Math Blaster and Reader Rabbit. My kids never ask for textbooks but they do ask for computer games. We must capitalize on this. We must use the tools that our kids enjoy to teach them and help keep them connected. If we can help them learn to love learning, it doesn't matter what tools we use. We have to make learning fun.

When we look at technology in education we must not make the mistake of viewing technology only as a subject. We should look at it as a tool to make tasks easier, faster, and perhaps even better. All around us technology is changing the way we do things and making them easier. We do our banking with ABM's; we hardly think about that anymore. We use point-of-sale in stores; we're starting to use debit cards. Smart technology in our cars tells us when we need an oil change or when something is wrong. It also tells the mechanic how to fix them. We use answering machines and devices that tell us who's calling us. These are all technologies that are changing the way we do things. Technology can offer the same potential for educators. We can use voice, video, graphics, live feed, databases, and networks to help our kids read, write, do math and science, create art, expand their imagination, analyse things, develop critical-thinking skills, and do problem solving on real problems that they get from real business people. They can work in teams, make decisions, and do independent learning and research, and if we do it right, they can have fun doing it.

The Royal Commission on Learning rightfully pointed out that the role of teacher is an extremely tough one. They must deal with things we never imagined when we were in the school system, such as diversity of language, students with special needs, and problems of violence. They also must deal with the fact that information has been doubling every three to five years, and the rate of change in the society that they are preparing kids for is exponential. We in business and industry who often have the luxury of attending courses, comparing best prac-

tices around the world, and sharing with our peers can't keep up. How do we expect the teachers to? Technology, used properly, can help.

We need to give our teachers the best tools and resources we have. We must help them expand the four walls, give them access to databases, libraries, and experts in business and industry who can bring relevance to the classroom. We must provide them with linkage to other teachers in other classrooms in other schools who have similar problems so they can share ideas, approaches, assignments, knowledge, and best practices. In business we partner, we merge, we acquire companies, and we do almost anything possible to acquire new skills and knowledge. There's no shame in going outside for help; we encourage it. Even IBM and APPLE are partnering. Our teachers need the same opportunities to bring in the best knowledge and use the best tools available to ensure that all

students reach their maximum potential.

Education has to prepare our kids for the information age. In the technology business, we see no end in sight to the progression of technology. Our processor speeds, our memories, are going to continue to double every six to nine months for the next ten to twenty years. Technology is going to become much more pervasive as it becomes cheaper and easier to use. We don't know what it's going to mean to the way we do our jobs in the future. We work at home and telecommute; we order products via the Internet; we use mobile work stations — all of which create new and different jobs and require new skills. We must prepare our children for this unpredictable world. They can't learn it all; we can't teach it all. But it's important to help them learn how to learn, to work in teams, to find information, to query databases, to think, to make decisions. We must create an environment in the classroom that's as

similar as possible to the world that they're going to be working in.

As a society we are moving from mass production, one size fits all, to mass customization, where we use common tools to deliver individualized products. (Today you can order jeans that are made to measure from Levis.) This is possible with technology. We can offer our children individualized learning that meets their unique needs delivered in a mass customized classroom by a teacher who has all the tools. The results should be that students can get the best education possible. We can help them graduate with the skills that the Royal Commission says are so important and so similar to the skills that the Conference Board of Canada recommended for future employees — to think, create, analyze, reason, synthesize, understand, communicate, learn, and keep learning and surviving in an unpredictable and fast-changing world.

Knowledge-Building Technologies

Beyond Information Access

MARLENE SCARDAMALIA¹

Professor, Centre for Applied Cognitive Science, OISE

The Royal Commission's recommendations on technology are sane and sensible — and ten years ago they would have been considered forward-looking. For, ten years ago the software available to schools consisted of lots of programs for doing this and that — programs of highly variable quality, calling for Circular 14-type screening — plus business productivity software adapted for student use. That is still mostly what is in use in schools. In the hands of creative teachers, it's possible to do great things with it. But we have also seen it used in some of the worst teaching we have observed.

The irony is that ten years ago a Royal Commission would have noted that Ontario was a leader in educational technology. Somehow that lead was lost. There is no suggestion in the current report of regaining leadership or of a guiding vision. There is more the feel of Ontario as a discriminating consumer, not a creator of mainstream technology. To the Royal Commission, it seems, innovation consists of model-school projects using off-the-shelf technology. That, too, was a forward-looking idea ten years ago. It was the idea behind the Apple Classrooms of Tomorrow program. It is interesting to note, however, that Apple's first venture into advanced educational software did not come out of their model classrooms. It came, in fact, from Huron Street Public School in

Ontario, and CSILE (Computer-Supported Intentional Learning Environments) is a technology developed at OISE. In its press release of CSILE (termed Collaborative Learning Product by Apple), Apple Inc. states:

Apple Introduces Ground-Breaking Product For Collaborative Learning

During a meeting of key education press at Apple headquarters today, the company introduced [the] Collaborative Learning Product, an integrated, research-based product and the first collaborative learning offering available for the K-12 education market. The Collaborative Learning Product allows students to build their understanding of a topic by working in discussion groups while sitting at personal computers. Using the specially designed collaboration software, students are able to send electronic notes to one another to discuss events, examine factual information and raise and address questions. Once they have entered their responses to one another in a shared database housed on a workgroup server, they can hone their ideas as they add comments to the growing discussion.

Unlike bulletin-board services or electronic mail, the network-based product provides a structure for student-centered inquiry that extends the learning process beyond the traditional boundaries of fact presentation and recall. Classrooms using this product will be able to engage in

"knowledge construction" through a process that entails problem statement, theory presentation, comment and the introduction of new information.

"We've been using collaborative learning for a long time," notes June Fuji, a teacher at the Ohlone School in Palo Alto, Calif. "What this product adds is a structure for writing and knowledge building. It's designed so that many students — even in different classes — can work together. And because it permits students 'think time,' it provides a more even playing field."

This product is the result of years of education research...and directly addresses the education reform recommendations detailed in the SCANS (Secretary's Commission on Achieving Necessary Skills) Report, published in July, 1991 by the U.S. Dept. of Labor. This report highlighted the need for students to learn a set of skills critical to success in the workplace of the 21st century. These skills include the ability to organize resources, to work with others, to learn a variety of technologies, as well as the ability to acquire, understand, and evaluate information.

As the Apple release suggests, the CSILE technology invented at OISE rep-

resent, centered in St. Louis, is probably the most deeply innovative educational development project of its scale anywhere. And it not only uses Ontario-based technology, but its project director, Mary Lamon, is a Canadian, living in Toronto.

CSILE was built originally on the Ontario-invented and developed ICON computer, which was far enough in advance of the field to give us a substantial lead with networked architectures. Only years later, with support from IBM and Apple, was CSILE exported to IBM then Macintosh platforms. Ironically, it is now claimed as an Apple invention, addressing learning guidelines put out by the U.S. Department of Labor. Andrew Nikiforuk, writing for the *Globe and Mail* in 1992, suggested this sort of thing would happen, that if Canadians do not seize opportunities for leadership they will have to settle for the branch plant status that the Royal Commission seems to take for granted.

Ontario has the potential to lead, and should be taking steps to realize that potential. A first step will be rethinking the recommendations set out by the Royal Commission.

Contrasting Recommendations: Learning, Teaching, and Information Technology

To give a sense of the way the Royal Commission has approached educational technology, I have abstracted from their recommendations phrases that indicate the action they propose. The first thing to note is that virtually all the actions are to be carried out by the Ministry of Education and Training. Beyond this, however, the action phrases themselves strikingly reveal the kind of thinking represented in the Report.

Key Technology-Related Actions Recommended by the Royal Commission

Actions to be carried out by the Ministry of Education and Training:

- tabulate available resources
- create a clearinghouse
- facilitate alliances
- develop standards
- develop licensing protocols
- support high-profile and diverse projects

- approach other ministries
- co-ordinate efforts to distribute surplus computers
- increase the budget for purchasing
- ensure Circular 14 assessment of electronic materials
- identify priority areas in which Canadian content and perspective are lacking
- promote production
- support projects to extend access
- upgrade Contact North from audio to interactive video

Other actions, not necessarily carried out by the Ministry:

- make educational use of information technology part of the curriculum for teachers
- promote professional development for "appropriate use of information technology in the classroom"

Summary: Themes Underlying Royal Commission Recommendations

Three themes are evident in these recommendations: (a) access, (b) centralized control, and (c) implementation. Overall, the recommendations are a blueprint for bureaucratization, not innovation.

Conceptual Framework for an Alternative Set of Recommendations

At the same time that the Royal Commission was conducting its interviews, Carl Bereiter and I were conducting a special project on school reform as fellows at the Center for Advanced Study in the Behavioural Sciences in California. In this capacity, and subsequently as Scholars-in-Residence at the American Institutes for Research, we conducted an international study of school reform projects, focussing on those that are yielding substantial educational gains. These studies were conducted over the same time period as the Royal Commission investigations. A summary review of trends that we found to be associated with significant educational initiatives follows.

1. *Constructivism as the dominant view of learning espoused by contemporary educators* (Duffy & Jonassen, 1991). According to this view, subject-matter learning arises from students' own

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resents a new generation of educational technology. It is not business software retooled for children; it is technology specifically designed to support knowledge construction. It provides more than a set of tools. It provides an environment to support the kinds of inquiry, information search, and discussion that go on in research teams and knowledge-building groups of all kinds. Accordingly, we call it "knowledge-building technology." We have been working on the development of knowledge-building technology for nine years, and are happy to see this work influencing technology developments elsewhere. The Schools for Thought pro-

efforts to understand the world, driven by their own perceived knowledge needs, with books and other information sources serving as tools in knowledge construction rather than as direct sources of knowledge.

2. *Increasing concerns about reconciling the constructivist view with individual students' needs and with societal goals*, as expressed in curriculum standards and the like. An entire issue of the *Journal of Special Education* (Harris & Graham, 1994) was devoted to such concerns.
3. *The shift in educational computing from single-user instructional software to networked software to support collaborative inquiry* (Pea, 1994).
4. *Increasing focus on understanding as the central goal of instruction* and as the goal driving educational reform (Perkins, 1992).
5. *The "rhetorical turn" in education and epistemology*, viewing knowledge as something constructed primarily through social discourse (Bruner, 1990).
6. *An increasing concern with establishing and enforcing standards* in elementary and secondary education.
7. *An enlarged conception of education, which sees it as a function of the whole society*, with schools playing an important role but one deeply imbedded in a dynamically structured "learning society" (Keating, in press).

All these issues are recognized in the Report of the Royal Commission on Learning (1994). However, the means of dealing with them coherently, at either a conceptual or a programmatic level, are left unspecified. With due regard for the very large scope of the Royal Commissioners' inquiry, we may note that they largely overlooked the potential of information technology to play an integrative role in their vision of a society committed to learning. The computer was treated primarily as a classroom tool. This is understandable. As the Commissioners noted (Vol. IV, p. 5), widespread attention to the "information highway" and its implications was just emerging during the period of the inquiry and would not have figured prominently in consultations.

A fundamental part of the "learning society" concept is embodied in the

Royal Commission's treatment of "community education." It is that the stakeholders should also be contributors. Thus, the proposed school-community councils have the dual role of representing the stakeholders — segments of the community to which the school is accountable — and at the same time enlisting them in contributing in various ways to the educational process. The same reasoning, however, applies to

At the same time that the Royal Commission was conducting its interviews, Carl Bereiter and I were conducting a special project on school reform.

other kinds of connections. Secondary schools have a stake in the outcomes of elementary education, and post secondary institutions have a stake in the outcomes of secondary. Should they not, accordingly, be contributing? And are there not possibilities of contributions flowing in the reverse direction — from elementary school students to secondary or postsecondary students, from school students to teachers and teachers in training, and from any of these to the formulators of curriculum guidelines and standards? Carried to its logical limit, community education may be envisaged as a fully interacting network of people in all parts of the community who are simultaneously learners and contributors to the learning of others.

But how could such a complex network actually function? This is where computer-based communication networks may enter the picture. The Internet already serves to link a great diversity of people, although organizing this diversity in functional ways remains a challenge for technology and social design. The following are some observations on educationally-relevant linkages. (These are undocumented, based on direct observation or informal reports of colleagues.)

- There are many network conferences dealing with education, which are successful in that there are active partici-

pants who appear to profit from their involvement; but active participants usually represent only a small fraction of those eligible to participate.

- The most successful classroom uses of wide-area networks have been for cross-school research projects, such as ones organized by the National Geographic Society. These are typically designed on an opportunistic basis, however, rather than on the basis of curriculum requirements. They pursue topics such as climate and dialect differences, which lend themselves to comparing information that students collect in different localities. Basic topics in science, which typically pertain to phenomena that do not vary geographically (physiology, electricity, etc.), thus tend to be neglected.
- Electronic mail links have been used as a way for scientists and other subject-matter experts to contribute to classroom learning. Serious problems with this approach have appeared, however:
 - The workload for volunteers is very high, raising doubts about sustainability.
 - One classroom seems to be about all a single volunteer can handle, raising doubts about scalability (there are far more classrooms than there are prospective knowledgeable volunteers in most subject-matter areas).
 - Volunteers often have trouble responding to questions at the appropriate level or in educationally desirable ways; some educators talk of providing training for volunteer subject-matter experts.
 - Students may not make good use of experts' time and knowledge, asking questions to which they should be able to find answers themselves. Hence, teacher management may be required.
 - At a deeper level, many educators have misgivings about the whole process, because it seems contrary to constructivist principles. It implies that knowledge is "out there" in the minds of experts, not something to be constructed through the students' own efforts to make sense.

The problems noted are not peculiar to

the network medium. The same problems with volunteer subject-matter experts could occur, and might even be intensified, in a program that called for their personal presence in the classroom.² An advantage of the network medium, however, is that the technology can be redesigned in an effort to remedy the problems.

An important agenda for school reform is experimentation with alternatives to the technologies currently in use for educational networking. Virtually all educational uses of networks are based on e-mail or file transfer.³ Although these are immensely valuable technologies in their own ways, neither one lends itself very well to collective activity or to the sustained build-up of knowledge. These purposes are more directly served by a shared database, which participants may use and contribute to in various ways. In the business world, Lotus Notes™ is the prime example of such an approach, and it is being widely adopted by businesses setting out to become "learning organizations." Notes, and the approach it embodies, is perceived to be so important to the future of business computing that it was the primary motivation for IBM's recent three billion dollar buyout of Lotus Development. In the education world, CSILE™ is the prime example, antedating Lotus Notes by several years (Scardamalia, Bereiter, McLean, Swallow, & Woodruff, 1989). The head of collaborative research for Lotus Development Corporation referred to CSILE as "probably the leading example of groupware technology used in classroom settings." It has directly influenced components of other groundbreaking projects, for example, the Collaboratory Notebook of Northwestern's CoVis project and Georgia Tech's CaMILE.

An Alternative Set of Recommendations

Based on socio-constructivist epistemologies, analysis of school reform initiatives worldwide, and our own experimentation and evaluation with new knowledge media, we suggest the following sorts of recommendations.

- Reinvent schooling in the context of a knowledge-building society

Create models for knowledge advancement extensible to all sectors of society, with schools integral to cross-sectorial communities for learning and knowledge creation, not a world apart. The Royal Commission proposes a model for "Community Education" that is consonant with such a model, but its recommendations for information technology read as a different mission altogether.

- Create novel funding structures and alliances that favour education-first technologies

At present, our school technologies are vendor-dominated, favoring productivity and presentation software designed for business use and a wide variety of educational applications that lead to fragmentation of curriculum. The Integrated Learning Systems designed to produce coherent packaging of educational materials are proving disappointing. Alternat-

An important agenda for school reform is experimentation with alternatives to the technologies currently in use for educational networking.

tives that put knowledge-building at the heart of the design challenge are needed.

- Democratize processes of invention and society's knowledge resources

New technologies provide new opportunities, as well as dangers. We must use educational technologies in ways that turn diversity into a strength rather than creating underclasses. The system we have been developing is distinctive for demonstrating the *absence* of significant differences in participation between males and females and between those who, measured by standardized achievement tests, are at the lower- and higher-ends of the ability spectrum. More importantly, diverse contributions help to lift the whole process. We need to take

as a design challenge the creation of technologies that benefit all users.

- Explore the power of distributed versus centralized processes

The most effective research and innovation efforts demonstrate the power of distributed versus centralized processes, and suggest potential conflict between centralized curriculum initiatives and student-driven inquiry, and between mandated assessments and self-initiated efforts at educational advancement. As suggested below, new programmes of research are needed to provide creative solutions.

- Encourage research and invention to channel opportunities of new knowledge media for more effective education and the creation of a knowledge economy

New opportunities include:

- virtual job opportunities, practica for professional development, and meeting grounds for those working on parallel problems
- novel uses of volunteers and retirees
- special facilities for inclusion of all members of the populace
- administrators, experts, and curriculum writers as on-line knowledge workers, not distant figure-heads
- student creativity used in the service of a knowledge economy
- Replace outmoded curriculum and evaluation processes with systems for local autonomy with global relevance

New technologies make it possible for teachers and students to be at the heart of curriculum and assessment processes. In the past, a delivery model for curriculum and standards may have been needed — with experts establishing content guidelines, curriculum writers translating these into forms deliverable to teachers, and students treated as the end-of-the-line consumers. With new knowledge media, teachers and students are positioned to contribute creatively to curriculum designs and resources, with curriculum experts and evaluators participating in the process, not standing outside and above it. Such initiatives will occur on a global scale, so Circular 14 type screening is well off the mark. New systems

are needed to support fast-paced, global processes for continual improvement, as opposed to outmoded and lengthy cycles of curriculum publication.

- Demonstrate superior educational achievements

Rather than investing in schools to show off technology, we need to invest in schools that demonstrate new possibilities for educational achievement. This does not mean, primarily, improved test scores — although successful technologies produce those as well (Scardamalia et al, 1992). It means levels of knowledge and thinking that go beyond the modest expectations of mass assessments and that would give Ontario graduates a privileged position in the global knowledge-based economy. Will such schools also function to demonstrate educational technology? If not, something is wrong with the technology.

Comparison Between the Royal Commission and Alternative Recommendations

The Royal Commission's recommendations, summarized above, are concerned almost entirely with measures to *promote* and *regulate* the use of computer technology. They are consistent with other recommendations of the Commission, relating to centralized curriculum plan-

ing and evaluation. All in all, they represent a bureaucratic, top-down managerial approach to educational reform. As is characteristic of such an approach, it is cautious and short on vision. I personally do not think it is an approach that can keep Ontario in the running during the next decade. It is aimed at enabling Ontario students to do the kinds of work that schooled people all over the world

are now able to do, and usually for less money. The alternative recommendations are based on the view that there have, in fact, been major breakthroughs in technologies for education and that the leading countries in the next decades will be the ones that are most successful in taking advantage of and further advancing those technologies. These are technologies for building and working with knowledge.

Possibilities exist, however, not only for harmonizing centralized curriculum planning and evaluation with student-driven collaborative inquiry but also for coordinating these objectives with two others arising from Royal Commission recommendations: greater community involvement in school-level education and better connections across different levels of education and between education and work. These intriguing possibilities arise from the greatly expanded opportunities that wide-area network communication affords for interaction among previously separated individuals, groups, and spheres of activity. Research is essential for determining the feasibility of the following:

- Engaging students in implementing the curriculum guidelines and standards that apply to them.
- Creating overlapping communities of inquiry involving elementary, secondary, and university students, their teachers, working scientists, and interested parents and others, all working within the same general problem area.

Educational policies adequate for the 21st century cannot be created simply by analyzing current needs, studying projections for the future, and trying to balance the two. The result will be cautious compromise. That, more or less, is what has come to us from the Royal Commission. But the 21st century is being created right now. It is being created by innovative industries around the world, in poor nations as well as rich, and by governments trying to regulate and at the same time spur on the development of knowledge-based enterprises. The question for us is whether education will have an active role in creating the future or whether it will just be a "resource provider." In order for education to have an active role, I believe, it has to be reconceived as part of a society-wide

effort aimed at advancing the creation, distribution, and utilization of knowledge.

Where to Next?

In 1992, a *Globe and Mail* report warned that another Canadian invention was heading South. Writing about CSILE, Nikiforuk said "Although U.S. school reformers hail it as a novel project that could well shape the schools of tomorrow, CSILE remains an almost unknown pedagogical tool among Canadian educators." It is now three years later, and the problem is more extreme. Ontario is the one place where the proposals and the technologies that afford them have failed

Educators on four continents are working with us to advance on projects of the sort suggested above and to use the technologies built here. Many are additionally providing financial support.

to engender significant involvement. In contrast, educators on four continents are working with us to advance on projects of the sort suggested above and to use the technologies built here. Many are additionally providing financial support as Founding Members for a new CSILE initiative aimed at having educators take charge of their own technologies.

Ontario could be in a uniquely advantageous position to focus on the problems of maximizing knowledge construction through networked, multimedia technologies. Other Ontario development projects of significance in this context include First Class™, Telepresence, the Dynamic Graphics Project's collaborative multimedia tools, and the CARATS research project. Knowledge-building technologies of the sort we describe fall in the networked solution/multimedia categories projected as a billion dollar curriculum industry by next year. The

It has to be reconceived as part of a society-wide effort aimed at advancing the creation, distribution, and utilization of knowledge.

ning and evaluation. All in all, they represent a bureaucratic, top-down managerial approach to educational reform. As is characteristic of such an approach, it is cautious and short on vision. I personally do not think it is an approach that can keep Ontario in the running during the next decade. It is aimed at enabling Ontario students to do the kinds of work that schooled people all over the world

potential for significant economic as well as educational gains from backing knowledge-building technology is high. We suggest Ontario put in place recommendations that support invention and that channel research to make today's educational visions a vital part of tomorrow's reality.

NOTES

1 The conceptual framework and research reported in this analysis are based on writings co-authored with Carl Bereiter. I would like to acknowledge the efforts of the entire CSILE team, without whose contributions the work reported here would not have been possible.

2 Incidentally, we do not question the value of personal visits to classrooms, especially for establishing rapport and for role modeling purposes. We see these, however, as supplementary to some more sustained kind of involvement in the educational process.

3 Conferencing software is essentially e-mail with "threads" connecting sequentially related messages. Bulletin boards are different, but their use in education has been incidental.

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The Uses of Computer Literacy

Critical Reflections on the Royal Commission on Learning

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I would like to make four critical points about the Royal Commission on Learning's recommendations on information technology:

1. Teachers' lag in taking microcomputers into the classroom is not necessarily bad and could perhaps even be wise.
2. It is not the schools' failure to make kids computer literate and generally well educated that is the major problem, but rather the failure of most traditionally organized workplaces to effectively use people's existing levels of skills and knowledge.
3. The social danger of creating a technological elite is not diminished but, in fact, increased by the Commission's recommendations on computers.
4. The most clear and present danger to educational democracy is corporate commercial control of the information highway, a danger the Commission either ignores or severely underestimates.

The Dazzling Charm of New Technologies

Can you use a computer, for example, to do word processing or send electronic mail? Compare yourself to the patterns found in the most recent OISE Survey of Educational Issues (Livingstone, Hart, & Davie, 1995), as displayed in Table 1. Younger people and those with more schooling are more computer literate. The majority of university graduates of

all ages, community college graduates under 65, high school graduates under 50, and high school dropouts under 30 are likely to be computer literate. While there is clearly a generation gap, the education gap in computer literacy has been closing rapidly among younger people. While the ratio of computer literacy between university grads and school dropouts over 30 is more than 4 to 1, among those aged 18 to 29 it is only 1.5 to 1. According to the US census, the majority of computer users are under 18. Some pundits have even declared cyberspace to be largely ruled by children, with most adults seen as "digitally homeless, the true needy!" ("Technomania," 1995, p. 53) Hyperbole aside, children not only "know about Game Boys, television, music videos, VCRs," as the Royal Commission on Learning notes (Vol. 4, p. 8); they do know more than most adults about microcomputers. So why is the Commission so keen to computerize our classrooms when most kids are already computer literate?

In one sense, it's a very old story. Take textbooks, chalkboards, radio, film, TV, and the computer-aided instruction of the mainframe era, to say nothing of ballpoint pens and hand calculators. In none of these cases has the school system played an important role in the development of a major new technology until it has entered widespread public use. The usual cycle involves the prediction of extraordinary changes in teaching and learning practices by zealous advocates, followed by careful classroom studies of effectiveness, and then teacher reports about their actual interaction with and glitches in the use of said technology.¹ School systems as a whole have typically introduced new learning technologies slowly and in limited ways. We are now deeply into the hoopla phase with microcomputers in the classroom. The Com-

mission's recommendations are not only narrowly focussed on microcomputers to the exclusion of other alternative technologies for classroom learning, but they appear to have bought the advocates' pitch, hook, line, and sinker, without the benefit of careful study.

As an historian, Commissioner Caplan at least should know better. Since publication of the classic studies of organizational change at the Hawthorne Electric Company in the early 1930s, we have known that enthusiastic attention by change agents to any novel technique is likely to have positive short-term effects on the recipients.² The few studies to control for the "Hawthorne effect" by comparing computerized curricula with non-computer classroom games and activities have found the latter to be just as beneficial to learning, as well as much cheaper (e.g., Wiebe & Martin, 1994). Many US schools have invested substantial funds in integrated learning systems, such as Apple's Classrooms of Tomorrow program. But the most thorough review of the related evaluation research to date has found that most of these studies are of poor quality and typically overstate moderate effects (Becker, 1992).

In the past, teachers have usually altered classroom behaviour selectively, to the extent that certain technologies have helped them to solve important problems without seriously eroding their classroom authority. Teaching is one of the most difficult jobs there is. In addition to subject knowledge, it requires substantial imagination, improvisation, and pacing, all combined with sufficient sensitivity to establish student rapport. Teachers are not "technopeasants" as the Commission implies (Vol. 4, p. 16). As

most university graduates, they are generally now fairly computer literate. The reluctance of many teachers to embrace computers more fully in their classrooms may be quite intimately linked with a knowledge of the intangible human dimensions that they and their students could be losing. As Larry Cuban puts it:

At a deep level that often goes unspoken, ... many teachers may sense how the introduction of machines into classrooms endangers those intangible, highly prized rewards that count so heavily in why teachers decide to endure in a most difficult but intensely satisfying job. (Cuban, 1986, p. 90)

Most teachers are probably now quite willing to use computers as an *aid* to classroom learning. But the school's many publics continue to insist that the schools pursue several inherently contra-

Why is the Commission so keen to computerize our classrooms when most kids are already computer literate?

dictory goals — that is, socialize all children, but nourish individual creativity; teach the best of past traditions, yet ensure that each child possesses currently marketable practical skills; demand obedience to authority, but encourage critical thinking and questioning; culti-

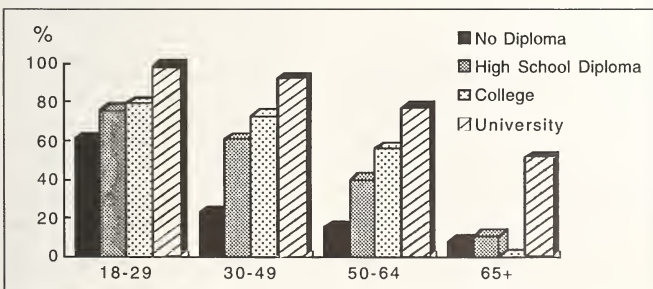
vate co-operation, but prepare children to compete).³ As long as we do so, teachers' multiple knowledges, negotiating skills, and intuitions are likely to be central to the task. Even the most sophisticated future computers will not be up to it.

The Education-Jobs Gap

This insight about the centrality of teachers' tacit knowledge to the education process resonates as dimly in the Commission's treatment of information technology as the tacit knowledge of employees generally does in the approaches to technological change in the boardrooms of the nation.⁴ There is now a pervasive rhetoric about the emergence of a "post-industrial society," a "new information age," and the proliferation of "high-tech/high-performance firms" in which growing numbers of employees will have to exercise advanced symbolic skills in running computerized workplaces. The current workplace reality is starkly different. In 1990, the US Commission on Workforce Skills found that less than 10 percent of American corporations were of this sort, with most still running on a hierarchical, mass-production model (National Center on Education and the Economy, 1990). According to the most recent extensive Canadian survey, the vast majority of our workplaces are similarly organized; less than 20 percent yet have any sort of self-directed work teams, a defining feature of the high-tech ideal (Betcherman, et al., 1994).

Employers are demanding higher formal educational entry requirements. The proportion of jobs requiring a high school diploma nearly doubled in Ontario during the 1980s.⁵ But potential employees continue to get more formal schooling faster than employers inflate their credential requirements. More than 10 percent of food bank users in Toronto are now unemployed university graduates (Daily Bread Food Bank, 1994). According to the most recent OISE Survey, about half of all employed workers under 35 and about half of those with post-secondary schooling say they have skills they would like to use but can't use in their present job. Forty-one percent of the Ontario workforce overall say this. Over 20 percent of the employed workforce is technically underemployed, in the sense of having at least one certificate more than their job requires, and

Table 1 Percent Who Can Use a Computer for More Than Games by Age and Education



most of these people actually feel overqualified for their jobs (Livingstone, Hart, & Davie, 1995; cf. Lowe, 1992, pp. 58–59). Most other employees, regardless of their formal schooling, feel that their combination of experience and tacit knowledge makes them adequately qualified for their jobs. Less than 5 percent feel underqualified and most of these are rapidly upgrading specific credentials. In

fact, Ontario workers on average spent over 200 hours of their own unpaid time last year learning things they felt were related to their jobs. The proportion of Canadian employees working with computer-based technologies did increase from 15 to 37 percent between 1985 and 1991 (Betcherman, et al., 1994, p. 14). But, as Table 1 suggests, our increasing collective computer literacy far exceeds

this specific requirement. The general picture that emerges here is of a population that is already educated significantly beyond both the formal and the actual requirements of current workplaces. It is not more computers in the classroom that are urgently needed, so much as the *genuine restructuring of our workplaces so that our available labour force can more fully use its existing levels of formal*

Focus on Computer Literacy

GERRY SMITH

Principal, River Oaks Public School,
Halton Board of Education

Computer Literacy

"...the ability to use the computer equipped appropriately with CD-ROM player, modem, and phone or cable line, as well as output devices such as printers and plotters; to gather information; analyze, organize, and understand that information; and present it clearly and effectively."

"Teachers armed with chalk and a blackboard are no match for the powerful new media provided through technology.... Computer literacy is already the new basic, ... something that young people take for granted."

"Information technology is becoming essential to teachers' continued ability to do their jobs well, and to students' future success in a world where computer literacy is becoming as universal and essential as print literacy."

The Royal Commission on Learning recognizes:

- the potential of technology to revolutionize teaching and learning
- the new technology is not a substitute for teachers
- computers are evidence that schools have some real connection to the outside world, that schools matter, that they are relevant and that they are part of the whole reality of childhood

"The student is an often ignored stakeholder in the 'school business,' who is more than ready for the information technology culture."

The Commission recognizes:

- new technologies have the capacity to offer the first qualitative change in the nature of learning since Gutenberg, whose book-based information structured learning for half a millennium
- the computer will change the role of the teacher to increase the amount of time and attention that is spent on groups of pupils formerly neglected (e.g., gifted)

"The child can set the VCR and play video games while parents, however many university degrees they have, are left baffled ..."

The Commission recognizes:

- the role of supportive technology, such as telephones
- the use of computers for student assessment
- technology extending the boundaries of learning for students
- machines must be at the service of humankind (without appropriate teaching strategies, information technology will not do the job required)

"Children do not regard computers as marvellous or breathtaking, but as part of the furniture — precisely the same way their parents were brought up to regard telephones."

"McLuhan's global village has finally become a reality in the world of education: learning need no longer be bound by time and place..."

Cautions about Technology:

- access to computers at home for less-advantaged students
- apparent lack of interest by girls in the world of technology
- availability of high-quality software
- availability of hardware in schools throughout the province to make technology a genuine learning tool

Technology and Integration

- students and teachers more receptive to information technology when integrated and seen as an essential part of teaching and learning
- emerging software and hardware gives educators the opportunity to personalize learning
- schools can escape the assembly-line mentality of the factory-model school

Commission's Recommendations:

- Ministry of Education and Training oversee the effective use of technology in schools develop high profile projects establish a national network of projects College of Teachers show leadership in technology training for teachers
- MET and Ministry of Economic Development and Trade initiate plans to acquire more hardware
- MET increase budget to purchase software, permit leasing, etc.
- computer software, CD's etc. be treated as Circular 14 teaching materials
- MET exercise leadership in the development of Canadian software
- every school be connected to at least one local network which is connected to other networks
- guaranteed access to the information highway (schools, libraries)

schooling, tacit knowledge of work, and computer literacy. The popular desire to do so is expressed in the vast majority support in the OISE Survey (84 percent) for employee participation in the management of workplaces. Clearly, the issue of general workplace restructuring was beyond the terms of reference of this Commission. But an uncritical acceptance of "paradigm shift" rhetoric regarding information technology and the failure to recognize the existence of underemployment and growing wastage of Ontarians' actual educational attainments left the Commissioners with no recourse but to blame teachers and the schools for an education-jobs gap that is largely not of their making.

A New Technocratic Elite?

Socio-economic inequities are not primarily of the schools' making either. But they have been persistently reproduced in our schools, as a long line of studies (including *Crestwood Heights*, *The Learning Machine*, *Stations and Callings*, and *Stacking the Deck*) vividly document. The Commission is not oblivious to this problem or to the "social danger" (Vol. 4, p. 25) of a new technological elite being generated by the greater access to home computers by kids in affluent families. The OISE Survey replicates Statistics Canada's recent finding that kids from the most affluent families are generally about twice as likely to be computer literate as those from the poorest families. In this light, the Commission's recommendation that poorer communities should have some priority for classroom computers and possible access through community centres seems at best gestural. For this proposal to have any significant effect on inequitable sustained access to computers, these schools would have to operate as *wide open centres* in poorer communities, with good facilities available day and night, along the lines of the community centres that Laurier LaPierre's inquiry on Ontario elementary schools proposed some years ago (LaPierre, 1981). There is now very strong general public support for integrated use of schools as community centres.

Moreover, the Commission conveniently ignores the fact that the demonstration school projects to which private corporations have devoted themselves have typically been in affluent suburban areas. It is not just coincidental that

Apple selected River Oaks in Oakville, historically one of the richest census areas in the country, for its major project in this country. The intent here appears to be nurturing of a technological elite in a largely middle-class community, with lucrative spinoff profits to boot. Class affinities and cost-benefit calculus make it unlikely that many private corporations will offer comparable support to such projects in our inner-city areas, such as Regent Park or the Jane-Finch corridor. The most consistent of all findings in the OISE Surveys since 1978 has been the strong majority opposition of corporate executives to increased funding for

Much of the computer hardware and a lot of the software now promoted for educational uses grew out of research on military computer-based command-and-control and weapons systems.

public education, an opposition which has grown in the context of definite majority support for increased funding during the past ten years. Of course, there are serious public funding constraints. But for the Commission to put its faith in the private corporate sector to voluntarily offer substantial sustained resource support to the schools in general, let alone with any serious preference for overcoming inequities in poorer and immediately less profitable communities, seems quite naïve.

Information Democracy

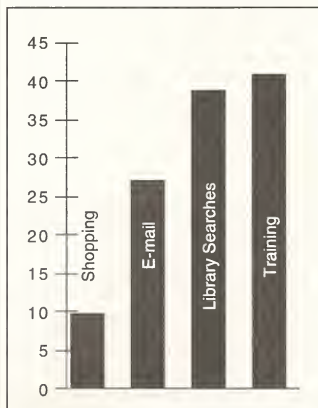
This brings me to my final and most important point: the control and purposes of the information highway. Much of the computer hardware and a lot of the software now promoted for educational uses grew out of research on military computer-based command-and-control and weapons systems, mainly in the U.S. The field of "cognitive science" emerged out of military research aimed at reducing

troublesome "human factors," and the field is still largely military funded. This cumulative military legacy includes, as Douglas Noble observes:

... the use of computers in schools for 'command and control' of instruction, from 'integrated learning systems' to the continuous monitoring of student performance, to nationwide databases and information networks linking schools, employers and government agencies. The military legacy also includes a massive research enterprise on human cognitive performance and learning within technological systems, engendering cognitivist incursions in schooling as well as the ongoing codification of job performance skills for the 21st century. (Noble, 1993, p. 8; for a more extensive analysis, see also Noble, 1991)

The Commission appears to be oblivious of this legacy and its possible hazards for democratic education. The essence of democracy is communication between human beings, not between humans and a computer screen. In spite of their military origins, the Internet and other forms of the information highway still retain the potential of *aiding and expanding* democratic discourse between human beings. But as PCs proliferate, the information highway is rapidly being commandeered by commercial interests. A clearer expression of the public will regarding the information highway is offered by Table 2, which indicates that, in its quickly growing awareness of this means of communication, the Ontario electorate is about four

Table 2 Percent Very Interested in Using the Information Highway for ...



times more likely to want to use it for educational programs and library searches than for shopping purposes.

There is obviously some need for traffic control on this increasingly congested highway. But by whom? To judge from the content of recent CRTC hearings, it will be the corporate lawyers of the big private cable, telephone, and computer companies. But, as the popular protest over cable companies' negative billing of new services suggests, the general public keenly wants more say in the process. The current OISE Survey (Livingstone, Hart, & Davie, 1995) asks the Ontario public whether libraries and public educational institutions or private telephone and cable TV companies should have the major role in deciding how the information highway will operate. A strong majority (64 percent) prefer the public institutions. The only real dissenters are corporate executives.

Public libraries have been the closest thing we have to a perfectly democratic institution. I borrow and learn, then return to share with others, all at minimal social cost and maximum access of information. This is the model we need to extend if we truly aspire to social equity in learning and wide public access to the information highway. Educational television has an especially important potential role to play in facilitating this process, as the Commission cryptically declares. The key question is whether our public educational institutions will be legislatively and materially enabled to do so. The recommendations of the Royal Commission on Learning give no intimation of the immensity of the corporate-commercial challenge to democratic access to really useful information nor of how schools, teachers, and students can retain any significant control rather than being reduced to active recipients of information glut. We had better find a way.

NOTES

1. See Cuban (1986) for informative accounts of this cycle with regard to film, radio, and instructional television, as well as the early use of computers.
2. For an overview of these effects in relation to education, see Adair (1989).
3. These contradictory goals are deeply embedded in the schools and in public belief, as the OISE Survey series documents for Ontario.
4. The argument in this section is developed in my book *The Education-Jobs Gap: Underemployment or Economic Democracy* (Livingstone, forthcoming).

5. Based on self-reports of respondents to our surveys. See note 40 in the Tenth OISE Survey report (Livingstone, Hart, & Davie, 1995).

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Teachers and Technology

The Need for Training and Support

RITA KARAKAS

Director, TVOntario's Distance Learning Division, English Programming Services

As the Ontario Education Communications Authority, TVOntario has been working for the last 25 years with school boards, education faculties, teachers, parents, and students to bring technologies into the classroom. Before us, there was the National Film Board, and before that the blackboard and the crayon, and the paper and the pencil, and the book. So I believe the Royal Commission on Learning has erred in this way: it has been seduced by one single technology — computers. In 10 or 15 years we will have another panel, and we'll be saying the next technology is the one that we need to implement in education.

The one thing the Royal Commission on Learning spoke very truly about was the role of teachers. They say teachers are

heroes. And they are heroes at TVOntario also. Without their involvement, the classroom as a working environment is not going to change and without change in the classroom, educational reform is not going to happen, and the kind of quality education we demand and insist on for our students will not happen.

Let me just share very quickly some statistics gathered by our Research Department who surveyed 62 percent of Ontario's 4757 schools last spring. Here are some quick technological snapshots: 80 percent of the schools receive a television signal; 52 percent have cable; 36 percent are wired for cable; 40 percent of classrooms are wired for computer networks. Schools average four VCR's per school (usually kept in the library and you can't necessarily take them from one floor to another); 72 percent of schools have cam-corders; and 11 percent have a videocassette player. Schools have an average of 30 computers: 40 percent are IBM, 20 percent are Apple Mac, and 40 percent are mainly Icon (if you look back

on the efforts of the 1980s, you'll understand why). Sixty three percent of schools have CD-ROM's; 50 percent have modems; 40 percent of schools with modems are linked with an electronic board. We would say that Ontario is one of the most highly wired jurisdictions in North America.

So what is the Commission really talking about? I believe, personally, that the Commission is really talking about its own seduction by business and industry which say computers and technology will make a difference in the classroom. But I believe one set of principles will help to make a difference in the classroom, and those relate to pedagogy, to teaching, to the teacher's capacity to relate and to work with students. If the technology is mediated by teachers who are able to use effectively the tools that are made available to them, then and only then will technology make a difference in the classroom.

At TVOntario, we are in the business of developing instructional design and curriculum-based videos for the schools of Ontario (although we're not on Circular 14). We also sell our products in 100 countries, and we occupy 40 percent of the United States educational television market, and all 50 states buy our curriculum programming. So, as Marlene Scardamalia has said, we do have things in Canada that we can export, and one of them is educational knowledge. Yet we also have learned that teachers use technology as an add-on, and as a stop-and-pause moment for themselves. Very often they'll say, "I can't use that show, or that series, or that program," and we'll say, "Why not?" "Well, it's not long enough. My period is 40 minutes and this series only goes for 30." I'm also very mindful of the success of the National Film Board, who brought film into the classroom. The majority of teachers didn't know how to roll film! So today we have 140 utilization officers across Ontario working with school boards, and every single one of them has literally to teach the teacher how to use the pause function of the VCR.

The Commissioners, I believe, also fail to recognize that the big corporations have finally discovered education as a marketplace. They have woken up to education as an industry. In adult education, which is part of my portfolio and includes teacher training, we looked at how much training is offered face to face

using train the trainer models, and how much is available via technology. We found that less than one percent is technologically delivered. Visualize the growth industry that this represents for business! TVO sits on a variety of partnerships with business and school boards to bring technology into the classroom and the major challenge in front of us is, not simply to give out a hundred thousand dollars worth of computers or fiber optics for high level testing, but to help the marketing people understand pedagogy. Before we bring the technological toys into the classroom, we need to sit back and ask, "What are the learner's needs?" "How best can this convergence of technology make those needs come

We would say that Ontario is one of the most highly wired jurisdictions in North America.

true?" "What are the teaching styles we wish to use?" "How best can we use those in using technology?" Regretfully, what we now see in Ontario is a full-sail market-driven approach to education as an industry, and at the price of saying to the teachers, "You're not really doing a good job."

The teacher's role has changed because there has been a significant sea change in our society and in the nature of pedagogy. It is of no use to have a computer in the classroom if the teacher still

does not believe in or know how to apply co-operative learning. So we need to work with industry to help them understand that technology, unless mediated, is just another stop gap. Today it's computers, 25 years ago it was television, and I don't know what will be in the next five years, because the technological uptake is so rapid.

There are roughly 130,000 teachers in Ontario's education system. The average age is late forties. Some are computer illiterate; some are not. Computer literacy is not the answer to educational change. Teaching literacy is the answer, with a variety of tools. Learner support for those teachers is the answer, as they struggle to meet changing curriculum standards, changing expectations, and rapidly changing accountability factors. Computers, televisions, telephones, and a variety of convergences are also what we have to be talking about.

One of my colleagues on the panel discussion talked about putting a telephone in the classroom, and that is a very revolutionary action, much more than putting a computer in the classroom. With a telephone the world is accessible. But I believe the Royal Commission on Learning has missed the boat; it's not about a single technology, whether it's computers, CD-ROMs, or a variety of the platforms, but it is about wiring the classroom; it is about learner-centred content, distance education principles used in content delivery, and teacher training. We'll make the technologies work, but unless we invest in the people using them and learning from them, 25 years from now we'll have the same discussions, but it will be only another set of technologies.

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Education Reform: Making It Work
November 15, 16 & 17, 1995, Nottawasaga Inn, Alliston
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Teacher Development

Implementing Professional Development

The Limits of Mandated Reform

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For the Love of Learning, the Report of the Royal Commission on Learning, is a thoughtful and careful consideration of the many complex issues in education. I commend the Commissioners for their outstanding work. But let me first give you my overall reaction to the reforms being proposed: they contain tensions between very strong, centralizing, authoritarian tendencies and some decentralizing and perhaps democratic trends. Centralizing is apparent not only through mandating common learning outcomes, but also through Ministry development of curriculum, province-wide testing, and standardized reporting; decentralizing may occur through the establishment of parent councils and proposals to increase the professional status of teachers, which in the common meaning of professionalism should involve greater autonomy, exercise of judgment, and self-governance. Tensions also exist within individual recommendations as well.

First, I want to comment on recommendation 58, "That a professional self-regulatory body for teaching, the Ontario College of Teachers, be established." I support this recommendation. However, the Commissioners and now the government have gone too far; I believe that by setting the agenda for the College, going beyond the "blueprint for the College," and determining what the College will be responsible for developing, they fail to understand the true meaning of a self-governing body. The implementation committee can facilitate the formation of the college by providing terms of reference and necessary legislation for the College, but should not dictate or inter-

fere with what might be the future business of the College. The College of Teachers should provide a *voice* for teachers, uncomplicated by bargaining and rights issues. The College of Teachers could have a major responsibility for teacher development if their mission (terms of reference) can be independently determined by members of the profession. I think it is essential that the Ontario College of Teachers emphasize a professional rather than a union approach if it is to become a self-regulating body for the teaching profession.

The next recommendation I want to talk about is number 75, "We recommend mandatory professional development for all educators in the publicly funded school system, with continuing certification every five years, dependent on both satisfactory performance and participation in professional development recognized by the College of Teachers" (p. 33).

My initial and continuing reaction to this recommendation is negative. Why? Mandatory professional development, even if accredited by the professional organization, the College of Teachers, fails to treat teachers as lifelong learners, as professionals who are responsible for their own learning. The implication of recommendation 75 is that teachers do not remain current, that they tend to become outdated and irrelevant, and therefore need to have a hammer to their head to keep professionally relevant. For the majority of teachers this is not the case. Teachers care about their students and spend many hours in various PD activities.

A worthwhile aim for teachers is to see themselves as "reflective practitioners" of teaching (Schön, 1987). Teacher development and the importance of teaching is very much a matter of teachers learning from reflecting on experi-

Commission Highlights

- College of Teachers
- 2 year teacher preparation programs
- Mandatory professional development

Government Decisions

- College of Teachers
- 2 year teacher preparation programs
- Initial certification exam for teachers
- Continuing certification based on professional development

ence. In schools, leadership must be provided to create a climate that promotes reflection and discussion among colleagues. This kind of PD is extremely valuable and must be encouraged. How would mandatory PD recognize this kind of learning?

In the Report, I believe the Commissioners were trying to find a way to resolve the tension between what might be the very best PD for individuals and a means to differentiate what they called "professional renewal," and the more formal PD. They suggest that only the latter would be acceptable for "on-going certification of a teacher." Why? I agree that all teachers should participate in significant professional development (and I believe a high percentage do) but recognition must be given to *what* individuals need and *how* they can best obtain it. I do not feel the exclusion of activities that might be labelled "professional renewal" from a teacher's portfolio is justified. They might be the most worthwhile.

What have I heard teachers saying about the formation of a college and mandatory PD and the need to recertify every five years? They are overwhelmingly negative about both the creation of a College of Teachers and the recertification of teachers every five years. They think the process will waste money which would be better spent in the classroom. They see the recertification process as ineffective at weeding out poor teachers. Regarding professional development, the teachers did not see a good relationship between taking a few courses and turning a poor teacher into a good one. They also disapprove of contrived collegiality as a form of professional development.

Gaining teacher support in such a climate, and creating a culture in which teachers embrace change, is a real challenge. In Britain, the experience of trying to over-legislate change has led to the need for an independent inspectorate with substantial powers to report upon the performance of the education system, as well as the performance of teachers and schools. Mandated reform simply did not begin to happen until schools knew that they were to be inspected and that inspection reports were to become public documents. What is the effect on teachers and the children they teach of this kind of reform? Is this the inevitable

next stage of development in Ontario? I hope not.

I believe that for professional development to be effective, and I am not speaking of mandatory PD, teachers must be encouraged to take responsibility for their own learning. That means that PD experiences must be relevant for the teachers and must be accessible to them. School-based PD can be effective and can be designed to be both teacher relevant and school-needs focussed. It is not mandatory recertification that is required to ensure quality teaching and improved student learning; it is a combination of quality PD and excellent supervision and mentoring for all teachers.

If space permitted, I would discuss the notion of trust. It is so essential not only to the establishment of relationships but

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also to the effectiveness of one's work. Andy Hargreaves, in his outstanding book *Changing Teachers, Changing Times* (1994), has written an excellent section on trust. He states, and I strongly agree with him, that "the establishment of trust is central to restructuring education. The challenge of trust is to reconstruct collaborative working relationships among close colleagues that enhance personal meaning without reinforcing paternalism and parochialism" (p. 254). Neither the Commission nor the Government respected teachers' personal commitment to remain current and to do what they need to keep professionally up to date. Thus they recommend mandatory PD. I sincerely hope the College provides flexibility for teachers to determine what PD is best for them. If they do not, PD will be irrelevant and will have at best minimal impact. As Giles (1995), a British educator who has moved to Canada, wrote:

To fully embrace the C.P.D. (compulsory professional development) approach seen so clearly by the Royal Commission as one of the four engines of change, supportive, rather than punitive measures are needed to reduce fragmentation, enhance professionalism, and support existing professional structures and best practice. (p. 8)

He further comments that if principals and superintendents are expected to assume responsibility for PD in schools and boards and if adequate resources are not made available, compulsory PD will do little to improve the quality of teaching and learning of teachers or students in schools.

I believe a profession must have a process that ensures quality and provides a fair evaluation of competence. In other professions, members are disciplined for "competence." For example, the College of Physicians and Surgeons grants a Certificate of Registration to its members in return for which they agree to follow certain rules of practice and regulations in dealing with patients. Equally, the Institute of Chartered Accountants conducts a random inspection of a number of offices of its members to ensure that standard policies and procedures are being followed. Most professions are self-regulatory in the matter of competence and errant behaviour. Peer and supervisory assessment are often used to judge competence, and depending on the assessment, members might be advised to either take some professional continuing education or be asked to design a strategy as to how they are going to improve their practice. Evaluation of the experiences is expected to be built into the professional development plan.

Recommendation 76 focusses on professional renewal and collaborations among a number of partners. This recommendation makes a great deal of sense. As schools and teachers are essential to the effective offering of pre-service, in-service, and graduate programs and as teachers are both mentors and researchers with members of the university faculty, it is important that faculty be collaborators in teacher professional renewal. We also are helped immensely in our own renewal by this involvement.

I believe if we truly want to have a significant impact on student learning then we must all work diligently together to develop opportunities for teachers. Only

in this way will we effectively facilitate individual teacher development and overall school reform. We must not lose sight of the enabling policies that are required to support professional renewal and teacher development. As the Royal Commission suggests, they might include:

provision for self-funded leaves, support of exchange programs of various sorts, and workload flexibility to accommodate professional commitments and opportunities, such as making presentations at conferences, editing professional newsletters, or being involved in research or professional writing. (p. 34)

Professional Development

I would like to discuss the implementation of professional development, as it is the vehicle for teacher development. What we do know is that quality professional development for adults must be guided by adult learning principles. Donald Brundage and Dorothy MacKeracher wrote in a report titled *Adult Learning Principles and Their Application to Program Planning* (1980) that:

learning involves a dynamic equilibrium between change and stability, structure and process, content and activity; that learning occurs over time and within societal contexts and relationships; that adult learners have past experience, present concerns, and roles relevant to work and family as well as to learning, and future expectations, all of which influence learning; that adult learners bring not only their mind but also their physical body, emotional responses, and that teachers are also adults and learners. (p. 3)

So how can meaningful, relevant experiences that are accessible and constructed with maximum flexibility be developed for the tremendous diversity that exists in teacher needs?

I suggest, let teachers accept much of the responsibility for their own development. Let teachers tell the College what their needs are, and if they can, how they propose to meet those needs. If they request assistance in finding the best way to meet their needs then help should be available. This help can often be found at the school level from other teachers and the principal. The College must not be overly prescriptive.

The recommendations of the Royal Commission on Learning provide an opportunity for faculties of education in collaboration with teachers and other

organizations to generate some exciting and innovative program models for teacher development and lifelong learning. There are a variety of contributions which faculties of education can make to the professional development of teachers, from collaborating in the delivery of

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institutes, modules, courses, to expanding and reworking their graduate programs to provide specialized academic preparation in a number of areas, as well as relevant professional knowledge (Ontario Association of Deans, 1994). The important consideration is quality: quality can best be maintained through development of a well-articulated delivery framework.

It is my contention that faculties of education, for the most part, welcome the opportunity to partner with school boards and federations. Within this stated willingness to cooperate there still remains a great deal of possessiveness and protection of "turf." Faculties, boards, and federations must genuinely work together. They must be prepared to share development, delivery, and resources. They must be prepared to work together and must strive for quality professional development options for teachers that are developed and delivered efficiently and with the effective use of available resources (people, places, finances). I ask, Why are faculties continuing to duplicate each other in professional development programs? Income generated from PD I expect. It is increasingly difficult to continue to do everything as the financial costs are too great. I do not feel it is any longer necessary to duplicate efforts. It makes sense for faculties to specialize, to consolidate programs, and to maximize the use of their resources. Diversity can build strength in faculties. I contend that in all of the faculties there is the will to provide knowl-

edge and experiences that prepare quality teachers. As defined by the Royal Commission, good teachers:

- care about students, and are committed to students' learning
- know their subjects and how to teach them
- organize and monitor student learning
- work effectively with others, including other teachers, students, parents, and community
- critically examine their practice and continue to learn throughout their careers

We must partner where possible and work with all interested stakeholders to ensure teachers meet the above standards. Yes, it will mean a completely different working environment and — as stated previously — costs and resources, including income, will need to be shared. I believe it is time to be truly partners in the education enterprise in order to better serve our public — the children and young people in the schools.

The Engine of Change for Teacher Development: Information Technology

The Commissioners believe, and I agree, that "information technology is profoundly changing the nature of learning for children and must become incorporated into our teaching strategies." I also believe that technology is an engine of change for teacher professional development. Recommendations 96 and 97 comment on the need for teachers to acquire knowledge and skills in the educational use of information technology. I propose that technologies be used to advance professional teacher development generally.

As stated in the Report, the Commission learned a great deal from the Culture of Change Electronic Village, a province-wide network of the Ontario Teachers' Federation. This network provides teachers throughout Ontario an efficient vehicle to discuss issues and share ideas about teaching. It is proposed that the network could grow so as to be a vehicle for in-service courses. Certainly the potential of this initiative, and many others that I will mention, is tremendous and can advance opportunities for teachers' professional development.

I think it is also important to point out that in both public and private schools,

teachers are using information technology to boldly change programs and the ways students acquire knowledge. River Oaks School in Oakville has transformed students' ways of learning and teachers' approaches to instruction with the computerization of the school. The Dalton School in New York City, an urban day school, is considered by many to be at the leading edge of the use of information technology. The technology in the school is making traditional textbooks obsolete by providing raw material distilled in those textbooks at the punch of a key. Frank Moretti, associate head of Dalton School, states that advances in communication and information technology are changing the world outside the school, and we have to plan intelligently if we are going to paddle with the current instead of being swept along by it.

It is in our interest as a profession to not only accept the Commission's recommendation "to incorporate information technology into our teaching strategies" but also to use it to the fullest for our own professional development. We must not be held hostage by technology but have technology fully integrated into our teaching strategies and be continually learning from it.

An Implementation Strategy for Professional Development: Distance Learning

I propose that distance learning be chosen as the method of delivery for teacher professional development. Distance learning can reach teachers across a wide geographic area, it enables teachers to learn while they continue to work, and it permits the formation of a learning group of co-workers and draws upon their immediate professional experiences. Distance learning can make education and training more accessible because of both the cost advantages and the utilization of communications technology. It is also clear today that with the use of technologies available there is no sacrifice of the quality of learning, teaching, and the production of knowledge (Boak, Kompf, & Boak, 1994). According to Garrison (1989):

Distance education is a species of education characterized by one structural characteristic — the noncontiguity of teacher and student. There is nothing uniquely associated with distance education in terms of aims, conduct, students or activi-

ties that need affect what we regard as education. When the adjective "distance" is used as a prefix to education there is an inherent restriction implied, but it does not change the essence of the educational transaction. (p. 8)

I strongly recommend that in any programs, courses, or modules developed, the design be predicated on a number of assumptions about how adults learn and the role of previous learning and experience in the process of gaining new knowledge and skills. The learning experience must facilitate involvement, dialogue, and critical reflection among teachers, facilitators, and others. The program and experience, including assignments, must advance an individual's thinking and contribute to improved performance.

It is essential in the kind of atmo-

The experiences must be so good that teachers will see them as valuable and will give them high priority in their very busy schedules.

sphere described, that the program, instruction, and people involved in facilitating the learning all model the philosophy advocated. As Michael Apple (1985) has so aptly described in his book *Education and Power*, the form of curriculum (delivery) is an educational message. If a program has as one of its main purposes to enhance the quality of teaching, it is critical to develop and maintain congruence and cohesion between what program developers do and what program participants do.

The challenge we all face is to successfully incorporate agreed-upon program philosophy and goals into a distance-delivery mode. In a recent paper that I co-authored, we identified three critical components to consider in any distance-delivered teacher professional-development course. They are:

1. Quality of the development, instruction and learning materials.
2. Site-based experiences including seminars, resources, accessibility.

3. Support systems available from course deliverers, schools and boards. (Boak, Kompf, & Boak, 1994, p. 10)

A distance-learning model provides flexibility in terms of time and place for PD. It certainly holds promise in strengthening school-based PD. In addition, distance-learning models provide clarity of outcomes and develop resources accordingly while supporting flexibility for teachers in meeting the expected outcomes. Teachers can personalize the means to fulfilling the broad-based knowledge and skills required.

The technologies available to support teacher professional development are many and are changing and advancing exponentially. There is also the will for partners to work together to develop materials for use with the technologies. The OTF's Culture of Change and the Curriculum Clearinghouse are but two examples of collaborations that provide resources to teachers. In addition, private and public partners have expressed an interest in working with universities and federations to develop in-service materials for teachers. There are many mediums available today that provide access to innovative and quality resources. Let me briefly mention some of the learning mediums available to course and program developers:

- tele/video conferencing
- computer conferencing
- video/audio tapes
- CD-ROMS
- site-based seminars facilitated by video/audio tapes, CD-ROMS, or other content-provided materials

All of the above are in addition to the Internet access that increasing numbers of schools and teachers have acquired from free-net providers and other sources.

Let me provide one more example of what is possible. An article in the January 27, 1995 edition of the *Chronicle of Higher Education* titled "The 'Virtual College'" describes how New York University proposes to offer an entire graduate program through an interactive network. The network transmits video files and other multimedia elements into students' homes over high-speed telephone lines. The information super highway we are progressing towards in Ontario with fibre optic cable will eventually provide

us with the capacity to deliver distant-learning experiences efficiently throughout Ontario. The NYU system gives instructors new opportunities to illustrate course material with graphics, animation, and even full-motion video. I am excited by the possibilities that distance learning holds for the PD of teachers, given all of the electronic innovations. We are restricted only by our creativity and will to co-operate. We have the skills; the resources can be found.

Stakeholders must introduce opportunities for professional growth that are meaningful and relevant. The experiences must be so *good* that teachers will see them as valuable and will give them high priority in their very busy schedules. It is incumbent on all of us in education to work together to develop the kind of professional experiences that teachers require. In teacher professional development — whether it is defined as professional renewal or as formal PD — teachers must have a voice to ensure relevancy and the PD must be of the highest quality and be offered with maximum flexibility of access.

We have a very real challenge before us, but one I believe we are able to meet.

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The Future of Teaching and Learning in Ontario

Reasons for Optimism

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Some trustees and officials of the Toronto Board of Education approached a number of professors and administrators at the University of Toronto, including the present writer, to discuss problems of common interest. A loosely organized *ad hoc* committee began to meet during the summer talking somewhat at random, in the hope of defining a central question. There were several things that caused us some concern: the number of students not finishing high school; the number of able students not reaching university; the number of secondary school graduates unable to adjust to the University methods of work; the role of Grade 13 in transitional process, and so on. For the most part, we were merely following the mysterious law that says that no society can flourish, or in the modern world even survive, until it learns never to let well enough alone. Even so, we were a little surprised to discover what our central question was. It turned out to be an academic question: "Does teaching in the schools, or at least in the secondary schools, reflect contemporary conceptions of the subjects being taught?" The answer was no.

—Northrop Frye, *On Education*

Northrop Frye's book *On Education* was published in 1960. Since then we've had 35 years of genuine and sincere efforts to reform education, and the nay-sayers would assert that we still haven't got it right. Perhaps there will always be a gap between the expectations of the public and the performance of the school system. Yet our task remains to narrow that gap and to reassess constantly both expectations and the performance of our schools. The problem with the task is that there has

been no consensus about the expectations for students other than that all kids can learn. Notwithstanding the unequivocal statistical evidence of significant improvement in the graduation rates of a larger and more diverse student population, we've been told that radical reform is required, and it has now been delivered in a series of Ministerial pronouncements.

The ground has been well prepared for these proposed changes. There has been a long and continuing history of educational reform in North America. The difference in the current reforms is that there has been an orchestrated government- and business-driven effort in the last five to seven years, fed by the media, to discredit the schools and the teaching profession. No one associated with teaching has escaped it, not even trustees. It is easier and faster to destroy than it is to rebuild. Manufacturing consensus is one thing; restoring faith is another. The decay in public confidence engendered by this public flagellation and the damage to teacher morale will not be easily remedied by prescriptions from Queen's Park.

The challenge will be appreciated by those who experience or study the polychronic time-frames and environments that characterize teachers' lives. Even among the most conscientious and professional of teachers and administrators in Ontario schools, there is a frustrating sense of overload, distraction, and lack of appreciation. Need I point out that the working environment of teachers is the learning environment of students: those who believe it will all be made clear in the new dawn of teacher-ready curricula and just-in-time resources will awake to find that these materials were good for the night before. The new day will require new learnings. In addition to new curricula and new technologies, we will need to have new teachers.

It is ironic that at the very time that we

are compressing learning time for our students, for example, by proposing to get rid of the fifth year of high school — we are doubling the learning time and costs for teacher candidates. I don't want to belabour an issue that now seems settled, but I believe a two-year teacher training program has the potential to discourage bright young people from financially challenged backgrounds and could deprive our faculties and, ultimately, our schools of the richness of cultural and linguistic diversity in our teacher candidates. I believe a five-year concurrent pre-service model would be a viable alternative.

Having said that, I am optimistic about the future of teaching and learning for a number of reasons.

First, we are all refocussing on new roles, and responsibilities. Seymour Sarason gives us an appropriate message about what this means with respect to students: "We often act as if students are the products of schools, whereas kids must be the workers in order to learn." They must want to come to school; they must be willing to work, even when no one is hanging over them. If we can't achieve this, no kind of school reform, however ambitious, will improve student learning and public education. It's hard to explain why we don't routinely ask kids, especially kids in trouble, how to improve schools, but increasingly, we are all — teachers and principals and administrators — doing this in our schools and providing for it to happen. To their credit, members of the Royal Commission consulted kids widely, even visiting detention centres. One of their recommendations on student rights and responsibilities, if implemented, would facilitate a new role for students.

Another reason for my optimism is that I believe that the need and the ability to break the cycle of disadvantage is within our reach. The focus on the early years of schooling is totally appropriate. The direction of both the Ministry and the Royal Commission is educationally and socially the right one, even if somewhat costly in the short term. We have to attempt in the early years to reduce the social inequities that have traditionally impeded the progress of the less privileged. Teachers have a fundamental role to play here.

I'm optimistic, too, because I'm convinced that the new role of parents and

communities in school councils will not only result in more accountability but also will greatly increase support for the public school system. It is interesting to note that when we ask parents to evaluate their own children's school, they are overwhelmingly very satisfied. When asked about other schools, their perceptions are different, influenced largely by hearsay. Accountability to community councils will be more effective for learning than publishing the results of provincial testing, and teachers dialoguing with parents will be critical for the success of students.

I'm further buoyed by the many principals I know who have not waited for the restructuring, but who have introduced new technology, got rid of streaming, modified the school day, focussed on new methodology, and encouraged and supported teachers in how to change — in short, principals who have reformed schools from within. They are principals who have displayed leadership and accepted personal responsibility for the success of every student in their schools. And I know boards of education

where teachers have worked very closely with principals and have developed correlates for school success that they use to evaluate their own performance and the effectiveness of their schools.

Finally, I'm optimistic because of the body of excellent research now available to us on effective schools and continuous improvement for teachers. Much of that research has come from our own federations, boards of education, the Ministry, faculties of education, and OISE, and it has made a difference. Most teachers, I believe, will develop their own learning, primarily within boards of education.

My board, the Peel Board of Education, is in the process of hiring 200 teachers from 3800 applicants. We are literally flabbergasted at the excellent qualities of the applicants. According to Des Dixon, even in the present model of schooling, teaching requires great organization skills, but in the schools of tomorrow, every teacher will need organizational skills on a par with generals and CEO's. Next September, I get to share my job with another 200 CEO's. I have every reason to be optimistic.

Expectations of the Contemporary Teacher

Educator, Gatekeeper, Caregiver, or Agent of Social Change

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Many years ago Raymond Williams, an English educator, was teaching a summer school course at Oxford University on the role of the working class in English literature. One evening he found himself standing in the university museum beside one of his students, a coal miner. The man explained that he found it very hard to talk about his work. At the professor's invitation, he began to describe his job, building roads under-

ground. When he finished Raymond Williams said, "I get the general picture." "Do you? Then draw it," said the miner, somewhat sharply as he handed the professor pen and paper. Embarrassed, Williams obliged. When he produced his finished drawing, a look of relief crossed the man's face.

The revisiting of that story in an old essay on "Education for Democracy" helped me understand my own expectations as a high school teacher for the Royal Commission's report because, like the miner in that story, I too hoped to experience a sense of relief that the Commissioners had heard our stories and

drawn our work well. I have to confess that reading the document left me with an odd mixture of relief and discomfort.

First, the Commissioners offer us an optimistic view of education. They produce some "good news" figures which illustrate how schooling has improved over the years, from the numbers of 16-year olds in school to the numbers in higher education in relation to other countries. They tell us that schools have never been the disasters that people claim and they remind us that schools cannot escape the problems faced by families, social agencies, and religious organizations. Observing the commissioners' carefully drawn lines of educational progress here made me realize how insidious press coverage of education in recent years has sapped my own sense of confidence in the work that we do.

The Report produces other statistics that reveal a less-hopeful picture. The figures for child poverty, unemployment, and the dreadful uncertainty of future employment are familiar to all of us. What is not so familiar is the Commissioners' clear statement that schools do not cause and cannot cure economic crises. I wish these letters had been printed in large block capitals on that page. What then is our part as teachers in the economic renewal — a question posed by the Order in Council which created the Commission?

It is impossible not to detect a sad awareness of another economic reality behind the optimism of the Commissioners. Academic success is still more closely linked to parental economic status than any other factor. We see this in the recommendation that there should be increased access to early childhood education because so many youngsters by the age of five are already suffering from disadvantages that will impede learning. We see it in the Commissioners' quiet statement that too many students from minority groups do not go to university. We see it in the muted acknowledgment that no matter what curriculum changes take place, students from disadvantaged homes will still be at risk of dropping out.

Faced with a bleak present and a dark uncertain future that intensifies such academic and economic disparity, what role must teachers play? The Commissioners urge teachers to provide students with a good general education to enable them to

adapt to changing circumstances. My discomfort barometer reacts very strongly to such pragmatism, for I see important ethical issues here. Do I teach students to question and challenge our society and examine the need for change — a dramatic view of educators as agents for social change. Or am I an educational gatekeeper for those who will

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proceed to secure employment or a palliative educational caregiver for youth caught in the midst of such academic and economic blight?

The Commissioners' answer is very direct when they turn to another question posed by the Order in Council — the role of schools in social justice. Teachers are to ensure equity for all students. To the Commissioners' credit they publicly celebrate the rainbow that Canada has become and reaffirm the place of equity in classrooms. When I read the details of legislation that demands and protects such equity, I realized, probably for the first time, the extent of the changes that have taken place in schools in the last decade, the attempts to include so many previously excluded. Teachers and schools have become front-runners in the policies of social justice — we are expected to be agents of social change. No wonder we feel so overwhelmed.

More specifically, I wonder if our current preoccupation with testing and teachers' accountability is directly related to the drive for equity in education. Is the bitterness of the accountability debate based on fear from two sides — from those who have been excluded in the past and fear that equity for themselves and their children is at stake and from those who have traditionally had access to academic success and who now

fear that inclusion brings a lowering of standards they hold dear rather than an extension of knowledge and of multiple perspectives in viewing the world? For teachers, there is a great value in naming this pain, in being able to recognize that we are under scrutiny precisely because we are seen as agents for or against social change. Only then can we behave proactively rather than merely react to each disaster story. The Commissioners have helped me in this process.

But it is also important for us to recognize that there is another explanation for the intense debate over testing and accountability. Today people expect public access to information. They want to know what is going on in schools. This is a healthy democratic urge and the Commissioners have recognized it as such. We can see this in their recommendations for the establishment of school councils with powers to advise on school policies. They want charters of rights and responsibilities for parents and children. I think the commissioners are right. Talk of accountability leads directly to the question of excellence. The Commissioners structure their recommendations for equity and excellence in education on four fronts — early childhood education, technology in schools, community supports, and teacher education. I would like to concentrate on the last two.

The Royal Commission urges us to re-establish links between schools and the local community. They recommend the co-ordination of children's services at government level, increased community/school liaison, community service by all students. But educational good sense so often founders on the rock face of political reality, and I wonder how much co-ordination will take place given our present economic climate where a children's agenda is very low down any political list. As teachers we can hear what the Commissioners say and take action ourselves, school by school; that is how this kind of change happens, not by government directive. And I know that this is easy to say but heartbreakingly difficult to practise.

Now to teachers. I detect some contradictions between the main body of the report and the Commissioners' recommendations. At the beginning, they mention the mass-production techniques, work specialization, hierarchical structure, and standardized procedures that have characterized schools for so long.

As I read on, I expected to see recommendations that dealt with such issues. Instead, the Commissioner's proposals for teachers are firmly embedded in the traditional structure.

They request an overhaul of education for new teachers, department heads, vice-principals, principals, and supervisory officers. Worthy suggestions in themselves but they leave untouched the old hierarchical structure that characterizes teachers' relationships with each other. There were other issues dealt with in the Report that did not make it to the recommendation level and these were by far the most interesting. The Commissioners mention the creation of schools within schools, the organization of students and teachers along lines other than the old subject-based curriculum and the importance of collaboration of teachers and students. But the focus of the Report is less on changing structures and more on changing teachers and on changing

them along rather ancient lines.

I like the recommendation for two-year courses and closer links between teaching schools and university faculties. I also like the recommendation for an independent teachers college and I believe there is room for both college and teaching unions. However, I am not enamoured with the suggestion that we recertify teachers every five years. The focus here is on the need to change individual teachers' strategies. Though important, this emphasis obscures other important issues.

I would have preferred recommendations that established true collegiality at school level, but that would have meant tackling curriculum, and it is here that I think the Commissioners' report is weakest. I notice that the Commissioners make several passing references to the Ministry's work on the Common Curriculum, and I wish that they had not abdicated their responsibility here, because in high schools I think that frag-

mentation and resistance to change is built on the traditional subject-based curriculum. I am deeply disappointed that the Commissioners focussed on teachers to the exclusion of school programs. Love of learning is not just about teachers with good strategies but about teachers with great content.

At the end of it all, what am I left with? I have to go back to the professor and the coal miner. In that small story we can see one moment of learning — the act of listening and being listened to, the wisdom and generosity implicit on both sides of that exchange — and the love of learning. And I recall stories in the Report where young people appeared to tell the Commissioners that they were bored in school, that they disliked Will Shakespeare that, perhaps like that coal miner, they found it hard to describe their work in schools. And I cannot help but wonder if they see themselves well drawn in this Report.

From Professional Development to Professional Learning

"Teachers Are Our Heroes"

ANDREW HARGREAVES

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There are three sets of phrases that I particularly like in the Teachers section of the Report of the Royal Commission on Learning. The first one is a very short sentence that says "Teachers are our heroes." We've heard that many times before; it is important to reiterate it. Almost every reform effort I have come across on this continent and in other parts the world puts teachers last, making them the marginalized victims of educational change rather than the vanguard who have the professionalism, the

competence, the insight, and the commitment to carry such change forward. So to begin by saying teachers are our heroes, not to begin by saying teachers are the major problem, is a profoundly important symbolic and substantive difference between this approach to reform and almost any other.

The second important statement is "the most valuable professional development is embedded in the ongoing life of the school."

However, I want to suggest that we might want to modify this statement slightly. In some ways "teacher development" is a demeaning, patronizing kind of term. There isn't a thing called "doctor development"; there isn't a thing called "dentist development." So why

should there be a thing called teacher development? Perhaps, therefore, we should substitute "professional learning" for the phrase "professional development," just as increasingly we are substituting "organizational learning" for "organizational development." This may challenge school boards to look closely at not translating "professional learning" days into "professional development" or "professional activity" days. Professional development days have often been assigned for report writing, discussion with parents, and so on. These are meaningful and valid activities but it is arguable whether they actually amount to professional development. When we call them professional learning, it's harder to justify those kinds of transmutations. Perhaps we should even legislate that a minimum percentage of school-board budgets be allocated towards professional learning so that when budgets are cut, professional learning is not disproportionately sacrificed.

The second statement, amended therefore, is that the most valuable professional learning is embedded in the ongoing life of the school. As the Implementation Task Force for the Ontario College of Teachers looks at professional learning, it will be important to think beyond reor-

ganizing courses, certification, and pieces of paper to replace existing additional qualifications. Pieces of paper are easy to shuffle; certified courses are easy to relabel. But teachers will tell you that the most valuable kinds of professional learning that they currently receive are of two kinds. One is the opportunity to plan new materials, new units, collaboratively with other teachers. Second is the opportunity to see, meet, talk, and exchange

The most valuable professional development is embedded in the ongoing life of the school.

ideas with other teachers in other schools and perhaps other boards. Teachers get a lot from talking to other teachers. But these are the most difficult kinds of professional learning to get at.

Recently, I was in a school that six years previously had been one of the schools that had given rise to my construct of "contrived collegiality." At that time, a principal and vice-principal were railroading a reluctant staff through a collaborative planning exercise. Many staff were involuntarily transferred by the board at the end of the year. This was the old model of professional development, the Rawhide model: "Head 'em up and move 'em out." This school now has a female principal. In four years, she has taken staff in this school in a very different direction. She said she would not threaten them with transfer but offered them opportunities to change jobs within the school instead. Once reluctant teachers are now putting together a multimedia program within the school, coming in on Sundays, and working with people in the community to put it together. There is no piece of paper that can do this. The principal works collaboratively. She supports staff; she praises them. This kind of leadership and support for building collaborative communities in schools is the most essential kind of professional learning that we can create, and no amount of paper or relabelling of courses will sub-

stitute for that.

This leads to the third statement, which is along the lines of what Michael Fullan and Michael Connelly said several years ago: "teacher development is a continuum and teacher preparation is one small part of that continuum." The most important priority in terms of change is changing the cultures of our schools as workplaces of learning for teachers, as well as places of learning for their students. That's the overwhelming priority.

Noreen Jacka and I have recently analysed the transition of a student from teacher preparation into her first year of teaching (Hargreaves & Jacka, in press). This young woman loved the preparation she received in the faculty of education; she enjoyed the extended practicum where she could practise co-operative learning. Yet in her first year in an unchanged school context and unchanged school culture, she suffered from exhaustion, lack of support, and lack of opportunity to implement what she had learned.

This case points to the importance of attending to the ongoing cultures and contexts of schooling in our efforts to improve professional learning. Second, the case also has critical implications for how we organize teacher preparations. Follow-up reports of the Holmes Group in the United States in the Royal Commission's Report point to professional development schools as positive places where new teachers can develop their practice. However, if they don't articulate with the rest of the system, these professional development schools become little Disneyworlds of educational change which simulate and sanitize success and can have no impact on the rest of the system.

In regards to professional learning, something the proposed College of Teachers might do is institute a process of continuous review with teachers, or a process for planning professional learning. Teachers could review, with an accredited member of the College, a portfolio of their professional learning — not just certificates, but the planning they have done, the teachers they have visited, the ideas they have exchanged, the networks by computer that they have been part of. They could review their intentions for the future in terms of professional learning, discuss the options and opportunities and ranges of choices there are and the ways that do or do not relate to school board priority. Perhaps some-

one from the College might be attached to a group of schools so that he or she could also understand the school context and give collective feedback to the principal, not about any individual, but about the current state of professional learning provision within the school as a whole.

By way of closing, I want to suggest that the place where we begin reforming teacher education is not in teacher preparation, nor is it even in the fashionable solution of professional development schools. We must begin by looking at alliances between faculties of education and school systems on a very broad front — like the Learning Consortium between four school boards, the Faculty of Education at the U of T, and OISE — to make widespread, systemic change that creates environments of professional learning for all teachers, including new

Teacher development is a continuum and teacher preparation is one small part of that continuum.

ones. In doing this, it is also important that we integrate the professional learning of new teachers with the professional learning and even graduate training of experienced ones. In the name of creating a continuum of teacher education, many of us at the moment actually perpetuate a discontinuum where teacher preparation and graduate in-service programs are arranged sequentially in tightly insulated boxes or programs so that neither should contaminate the other. If we are serious about supporting professional learning among new and experienced teachers, it is time that teacher educators broke down the Balkan states between their different programs. That is as much a challenge for OISE as it is for the province's College of Teachers.

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Teacher Development and French Language Minority Education

The Need to Recognize Unique Realities

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My focus of concern is on a very specific group of teachers, those working in the French language minority schools of Ontario. I would like to consider some of the recommendations for teacher professionalization and development in regards to teachers working in French language minority schools. My intent is not to make a critical analysis of the nature of the recommendations per se, but rather to examine how French language education is accounted for in these areas. As a preface to this discussion, it is necessary to give a brief picture of French language minority education in Ontario.

French Language Minority Education in Ontario

Francophones make up 5 percent of the total population of Ontario, about 500,000 people. They are concentrated in Northern and Eastern Ontario. Although the Francophone population in South and South-western Ontario is numerically greater, they are scattered throughout these regions, rather than being concentrated in particular areas.

There has been instruction in French in the province for over 300 years. Despite this fact, there have been recurring disputes throughout Ontario's history about access to and control of French language instruction. Since 1982, however, under article 23 of the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedom, Francophones as well as Anglophones, who live in minority settings in Canada, have been guaranteed the constitutional right to be instructed in their mother tongue. At the governance level, most of the French language minority schools are administered by French lan-

guage sections within anglophone school boards, where there must be at least three Francophone trustees. However, four entirely Francophone school boards exist presently in Ontario with more to come in the near future. In 1990, there were 324 elementary and 76 secondary French language schools in Ontario. In 1992-1993, 97,677 students were enrolled in French language schools — 4 percent in the Catholic system and 1 percent in the public system.

Teachers from French language minority schools have their own association, the *Association des enseignantes et des enseignants franco-ontariens* (AEFO), established in 1939, with a membership of 6,700. As the other teachers' associations, the AEFO is affiliated with the Ontario Teachers' Federation (OTF).

In addition to the transmission of knowledge and the students' socialization, French language schools play a critical and important role in the maintenance of the language and the culture of Francophones who live in minority settings (Gérin-Lajoie, 1993a, 1994; Heller, 1987). As a site of social and cultural reproduction, the French language school acts as an agent of mobilization for the Francophone community (Heller, 1994). Over the years, the student population of these schools has become more and more heterogeneous. Three types of students are found:

- 1) French-dominant speakers who use mostly French in and out of the classroom and whose level of proficiency is high;
- 2) English-dominant speakers who use mostly English out of the classroom and in many cases, in the classroom, and whose level of proficiency is low; and
- 3) students from diverse ethnic backgrounds who now live in Ontario, for

whom French might be a second language to something other than English (Mougeon & Heller, 1986; Heller, 1987; Gérin-Lajoie, 1993a).

English-dominant speakers include:

- 1) students who come from a French language family background where French is no longer used as the home language;
- 2) students who come from mixed marriage families where one of the parents is English-speaking and does not speak French and where, as a result, English is the commonly used household language; and finally
- 3) students whose parents are both Francophone but whose usual language in the home is English — a situation which is on the rise (Cardinal et al., 1988).

Teachers in French language minority schools are not always trained to work with the linguistic and cultural diversity described above. In addition, teachers

Over the years, the student population of these schools has become more and more heterogeneous.

often have little critical understanding of the particular political and economic issues affecting the Franco-Ontarian community. The reality and professional demands of the minority setting are seldom reflected in teachers' pre-service or in-service training. For those who are trained here in Ontario at the two Faculties of Education where pre-service training for teaching in French language schools is available, programs have traditionally given little attention to the issue of teaching in a minority setting. The challenge is even greater for those teachers who are from outside Ontario and come to work here.

Report on the Educators

Volume 3 of the Report, called "The Educators," examines what the Commission has termed "teacher professionaliza-

tion and development." This examination resulted in 36 specific recommendations, 24 of which deal directly with teacher education. The government responded quickly to the Commission's main recommendation concerning teacher professionalization, the creation of a provincial College of Teachers. It announced, in mid-February, its intention to create the College.

The quick response on the part of the Minister to a number of the Report's recommendations in regards to teacher professionalization and development demonstrates the government's eagerness to make significant changes in these areas. The new provincial self-regulatory College of Teachers is expected to assume control over professional standards, certification, and accreditation of teacher education programs. The merits of this proposal notwithstanding, some questions must be answered in regards to the role of such a structure for teachers working in the Franco-Ontarian educational system. For the moment, both the Commission and the government are silent on this issue. Indeed, nowhere in the Report are we presented with any indications that the College's infrastructure will take into consideration the unique reality of the Franco-Ontarian component of the Ontario educational system.

In his announcements on February 13, 1995, David Cooke defined the responsibilities of the new College of Teachers as well as an implementation schedule for some other recommendations concerning teacher professionalization and teacher education. I list these below together with my comments:

1) *To develop standards of practice by September 1996.* These standards will assess knowledge "of specific subjects, teaching ability, competence in English and/or French, ability to use computer technology, and familiarity with provincial curricula and policies." It is in my opinion that all teachers, but especially the teaching staff working in French language minority schools, need to be familiar as well with the social and cultural context in which Franco-Ontarian education takes place.

2) *To develop outcomes (expected results) for teacher education programs by September 1996. Starting in September 1997, pre-service programs will be two years long. Finally, the College will accredit all teacher education faculties.*

Once again, it is necessary in the context of the implementation of these major changes to bear in mind that teaching in a minority school setting differs from majority school settings and that outcomes as well as education programs must reflect the specific needs of the French language schools. Teacher education programs for teachers in French language schools should provide opportunities for participants to critically reflect

Should we expect the exact replica of what is available in English-speaking faculties of education, or could we count on requirements for programs that reflect the reality of minority settings?

upon the social, economic, and political context in which the Franco-Ontarian community is evolving. According to the Royal Commission's Report, one of the five dimensions of good teaching is that good teachers "critically examine their practice." This definition could be expanded to, "to examine the practice and context of education." As yet, there is no indication whether and how the reality of the minority setting for French language schools will be taken into consideration in the process of implementing the College and its mandate. In terms of the accreditation of teacher education programs, should we expect the exact replica of what is available in English-speaking faculties of education, or could we count on requirements for programs that reflect the reality of minority settings and that will equip future teachers with the skills they need to become well-trained professionals for the particular needs of students in these settings?

3) *To put in place a framework for teachers' professional development by January 1997.* This will include knowledge about new teaching methods, technology, as well as policy and curriculum development. Critical thinking should be

part of this framework too. As it stands, beginning teachers who work in French language minority schools are trained as if they were working in majority settings where language and culture are not issues, or at least not to the extent that they are in French language minority schools. As an example, up until very recently, many of the teachers in Ontario's French language schools were originally from Québec. This has been especially true for South-western Ontario where French language schools have experienced difficulties in attracting Franco-Ontarian teachers who prefer to stay in their respective areas, either Northern or Eastern Ontario. Teachers trained mostly in Québec, within a different social reality, must then adapt to the culture of the school as well as to the culture of the francophone minority milieu. In interviews I conducted two years ago with newly arrived Québécois teachers to South-western Ontario, I was told that the biggest shock for them was the wide range of students' linguistic abilities to speak French and their lack of preparation to deal with it (Gérin-Lajoie, 1993b). This is one of the reasons why in-service professional development is a critical issue for these teachers.

I would like to raise as well a concern about the resources, human as well as material, involved in the professional development process. It is a fact that professional development resources in French are difficult to obtain everywhere in the province, but especially in remote areas of Northern Ontario where we find a substantial percentage of Francophones. Much of the written materials available to teachers and students in French language schools in Ontario come from Québec and sources are conceptualized for students and teachers living in majority settings. The reality presented in these materials does not correspond to the reality experienced by students in French language minority schools. There is a pressing need to make significant change in this area. In terms of human resources, the same occurs. Teachers in French language schools, especially those who live and work in English dominant regions, often experience great difficulty obtaining professional development in French, by Francophones. This is an issue that needs to be looked at very seriously, if the College of Teachers has in mind to implement a professional development framework pro-

gram that will really meet the professional needs of teachers in Ontario French language minority schools.

4. *To put in place procedures for certification and recertification through the Ontario College of Teachers by September 1997.* An admission exam will be mandatory for all new teachers and recertification will be required every five years. Again, I wish to emphasize the importance of keeping in mind that teachers working in French language minority schools must deal with a reality quite different from a majority setting and that the College of Teachers will need to make sure that whatever procedure is implemented take into consideration all aspects of Franco-Ontarian education and that the teachers working in the schools are properly trained to do so. Any certification and recertification process will need to acknowledge that similarities exist between French language and English language schools in terms of what to expect from the teachers, but also recognize the differences that exist between the two realities.

The College of Teachers, by its nature, will become a very powerful agent in designing the future of education in Ontario. Its decision-making power in regards to professional standards, certification, and accreditation of teacher education programs represents a major responsibility *vis-à-vis* all educators in the school system, including those who are working in the French language system. The implementation of the recommendations on teacher education by the new College of Teachers will have a major impact on both pre-service and in-service training, regardless of the school system. However, the recommendations as stated in the Report do not fully recognize the importance of developing teacher education programs that will truly respond to the needs of the Franco-Ontarian school clientele.

Except in the case of the recommendation pertaining to the possible partnership between Faculties of Education, school boards, and schools creating a new structure called "professional development schools," where the French language system is specifically mentioned, there is no reference to teachers working or training to work in French language minority schools. Generally speaking, the recommendations on teacher education appear quite sensible, although it is

not clear, at this point in time, how they could be realistically implemented in terms of their financial implications, as well as their "ideological" implications. Some concerns have already been voiced about a possible loss of authority of teachers' associations over educational issues in relation to the mandate of the College of Teachers.

An implementation committee has been struck to advise the Minister of Education and Training on the necessary steps to take for the creation of the College of Teachers. Although representation from French language schools has been assured, other members of the committee must be made aware, if they are not already, of the critical role of education for the Franco-Ontarian community. Whatever infrastructure the government puts in place, it will need to address clearly, among other things, the issue of French language minority education in planning and implementing this new body. The implementation committee must first understand that it is not simply a matter of services in French and of translation of documents written in English. It has to do with the very

essence of the College of Teachers' mandate and how Franco-Ontarian education will be recognized and affirmed within the work of this self-regulatory body.

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A Pragmatic Look at Professional Development

Meeting Individual and Collective Needs

MARGARET WILSON

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The Royal Commission states, "teachers are heroes." It is useful to note that in history the distance between a hero and a martyr is very short. It is also useful to remember that we ended up with a Royal Commission because we'd had 20 years of unsuccessful debate about the direction that the education system should be taking. When I say unsuccessful, what I mean is that out of Hall-Dennis we got a revolving door of change,

much of which the public, for whom we work, did not appreciate and much of which teachers did not appreciate. We have come out a period of tremendous debate and dissension. The reaction of the Ontario Teachers' Federation to the proposal of a Royal Commission was that it would be a useful exercise if it succeeded in identifying some sort of consensus in the province on the direction the education system should take. If one looks at the reactions after the release of the Commission's report, it is evident that the larger Ontario public likes what it is reading. The public response has been positive. As teachers, one of the things we

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT: AFTER THE ROYAL COMMISSION

by Peter Angelini, Executive Director, OCLEA

The Ontario Council for Leadership in Educational Administration has been providing professional development services to the educators of Ontario for the past twenty three years. As a non-profit and non-funded organization it is imperative that our programming be relevant and timely as the vast majority of our clients are self-selecting and attend our events based solely on perceived value. The necessity then, for continual market needs assessment, is vital for success.

As anyone who works in the field of training knows, we live with the competing forces that surround this particular enterprise: the more the landscape changes, the more the need for training and adjustment. Yet, the more things change, the fewer the dollars to support training services.

When budgets need trimming, professional development is always the first to suffer. Doing more with fewer resources became the new reality, particularly in the late eighties. Increasingly, survival rested with being efficient and effective. But, no matter how good the program, dollars often continued to dictate success or failure.

As we entered the nineties, times became even leaner but the need for professional growth remained constant. Most of us found new ways to cope and most educators found the means to keep up to date. But even then, it was becoming increasingly apparent that something had to change. Public unrest, the need for accountability and the lack of accessibility to our school systems demanded a rethinking of the educational mindset. Hence, the announcement of a Royal Commission on Learning came as no surprise.

As one of many such service providers, we at OCLEA anxiously awaited the Report of the Royal Commission on Learning. The anticipation was, of course, that the recommendations therein would provide sufficient direction to the entire educational community as to where we were to go and how we were to get there. Hence, the perfect vehicle to assist in bridging the gap would be an organization like OCLEA.

Alas, it was not to be.

The fanfare that accompanied the series of announcements from February through March of this year, was short lived. It was clear that the report was to be submitted to a government that would not be around to implement it. Why then, would cautious administrators allocate funds to professional development programs devoted to examining the Report's recommendations? The mood was one of wait and see. Do very little in the meantime.

The educational community now awaits direction from a new Minister of Education and Training. What will the future hold?

In our view there are a few certainties that will unfold within the next year. First, school boards will be merged and there will be a significant delayering of supervisory personnel. Second, school councils will go forward and if managed well will provide much needed input and resources for the classrooms of Ontario. Third, educators will be taking the notion of total quality service much more seriously.

In a perfect world, the need for professional growth services would be assured. We await the new semester with guarded anticipation.

now have to grapple with is when we get a public response that is positive to some things that we don't like, where do we go next?

In terms of teacher development, or lifelong learning for teaching, if we look

The public has gone through a long period in which ... they no longer trust what we tell them about what is going on.

back at PD days and at the Additional Qualification system (and it remains true that about 26,000 teachers per year take formal courses), we realize that all too often things were being done to teachers, not with them. They were taking what was available, rather than what was needed. And what we have to think about first in rethinking ongoing education for teachers is who chooses, for what purpose, and how do we make sure that the right courses are available. There are individual needs to be met and there are system needs.

Certainly we have succeeded in meeting many individual needs, and partly because the AQ system has been idiosyncratic. Quite often the system was created by small lobby groups of teachers who got a course going, got the government to agree that it should be on the AQ system, and then tried to force it on everyone else — for example, media literacy. But the system needs all too often were not met — for example, the shift to whole language, or the Common Curriculum, or destreaming Grade 9, occurred without the kind of in-service that should have been available for such massive shifts. Depending on where you were in this province, or on the wealth or the efficiency of your board, there was imaginative in-service available or none at all. There were places where the *Common Curriculum* didn't even get from the school board offices to the school, so the teachers were asked to deliver something they weren't able to read. Of course the latest Ministry economies quite often lead to sending one copy of a document

to the school and telling the school to photocopy it. Given the costs that schools already face with photocopying, you get into major problems.

So as we rethink teacher development, we first have to think of what the student needs to have the teacher deliver and what the teacher needs in order to deliver it. We are not necessarily talking about "courses."

The next question becomes who delivers the PD program? I see the system becoming much more open to providers who may be associations, groups of teachers, or faculties of education. For technical teachers and in fact for many other teachers why not community colleges? Or why not private providers? If we are really talking about teachers being professionals, we will need to address self-directed in-service. And we will need to deal with schools that, quite validly, are doing so much work on their own that they should get in-service credit for it. I think that if we choose a narrow model it will be a gross error.

To replicate the past will not help. I still remember quite vividly a distinguished delegation of teachers from what was then the Soviet Union. The head of the education and scientific union had spent the afternoon at the Ministry trying to figure out why Ontario teachers were so unqualified when they hit the schools that the Ministry had on its record 600 AQ courses. The point is the system was not a good one. It was ill-defined and grew like topsy. We have to think in totally new ways about what teachers need, and teachers have to tell us because they will no longer accept our telling them, nor should they.

I think, too, that distance education is an attractive model because it overcomes the geography of the province of Ontario. We keep forgetting that Ontario is as big as Western Europe and when we talk about distance education, we always talk about the North. I had a conversation with a teacher in Cornwall last Friday who told me the easiest access he has to in-service of any kind is across a bridge to the U.S. It's easier to get there than to the nearest Ontario university that provides programs. We have issues of climate as well as geography that make it difficult for people in Ontario to move around, so we have to be imaginative. Try driving through the snow belt in the winter time.

At the same time, I disagree with Terry Boak about distance education being a good model for all kinds of in-service. There are some limits to distance education, even just human nature: people want to see each other. When teachers on OTF's Creating a Culture of Change network finally met face to face, several started to laugh. It was spontaneous. They had a vision of the other's physical being that was totally different from the reality. They commented at the end of the meeting that they would deal

A friend of mine at the Ministry made the observation that the longer we have been away from the classroom, the more we know about how teachers should teach. The same thing goes for everything we do in in-service.

with each other differently and much more openly via computer now that they had the chance to meet face to face. In an ideal mode, we would have both computer networking and face-to-face meetings.

Another issue about distance education is that we still have thousands of schools that do not have modems. It's nice that we are going to put computers in the schools but if we do not have telephone lines out of the schools, teachers will not be able to do coursework with other teachers. That's a major issue as the Ministry and school boards talk about access and what can be done with the new technology. I understand that this will be an increasing problem because as money decreases, that kind of telephone service is cut off.

I want to briefly mention the mandatory nature of the Commission's Report. We have to grapple with a public issue here that goes back to accountability. We know that good PD is voluntary PD, and that it consists in what people say they need. The problem we have is part of the problem that led to the Commission's

Report. The public has gone through a long period in which, for a variety of reasons, they no longer trust what we tell them about what is going on. They want report cards, not just on kids. (And they want report cards they can understand.) This means we need to report effectively to the public about the PD that is going on. The problem is that if this is managed in the wrong way, the money will be spent on the reporting that could be spent on the programs. So the challenge is to find a non-bureaucratic way of assuring the public that all teachers are involved in ongoing learning. That's quite a challenge because we are talking about 130,000 teachers in the tax-supported school system alone.

Another thing that we will run into, which is even more difficult, is off-shore credentials. I have been struggling with this and have come to the conclusion that whether credentials are off-shore or not should be less important than the quality of the program. Now back to my teacher in Eastern Ontario, I don't think that in a distance-learning mode we could give him quite what he is getting from the American institution. He is a science teacher and is working in labs with very up-to-date equipment, and that's the type of in-service he needs.

There are all sorts of other questions about how we will draw our in-service system but there are two things to keep in mind. First, we need to maintain our Canadian focus yet still allow flexibility so that we don't get too biased about always being the best; there are others who do things well. Second, we need to meet teachers' real needs rather than what we think they need. A friend of mine at the Ministry made the observation that the longer we have been away from the classroom, the more we know about how teachers should teach. The same thing goes for everything we do in in-service. If we are not in regular, intelligent contact with the people who need it, none of this is going to make things better.

The good thing about the Royal Commission Report is that it is optimistic and it wants to make things better. The Commission did connect with the Ontario public and that helps us connect with the Ontario public. We work for them, not the other way around. That is the most basic thing we should remember as we work towards constructive educational change.

Action and Accountability

Commission Highlights

- Professional development and resources for teachers to improve assessment of student learning

- Province wide literacy/numeracy testing Grades 3 & 11

- Independent small Office of Learning Assessment and Accountability

Government Decisions

- Province wide testing of reading, writing, math in Grades 3, 6, 9 & 11

- Education Quality and Accountability Office, with broad mandate

Constraints and Prospects for Implementation

Sustaining the Reform Agenda

MONIQUE BÉGIN

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In preparing for this presentation, I was driven by the following question: How did education make it on the political agenda, allowing for the astonishing series of implementation steps already announced by the Ontario government further to our 167 recommendations? The answer to this question cannot be obtained without a review of what led to the creation of the Commission. If I take the risk of playing the historian, I do so to shed light on possible points of resistance to change that the stakeholders and other partners may encounter, which otherwise they will not know how to interpret and overcome.

A royal commission can be an exercise in public education (the B & B Commission) and/or in public policy development (the MacDonald Commission on the Economy), as well as in research and scholarship advancement (the Carter Commission on Taxation), based on "a public inquiry." It is used when more than one course of action is possible or when the government does not know what alternatives exist to a given challenge. For governments, it can also be a technique to "buy time" or to create a smoke screen around an issue no one is able or wants to tackle. A commission of inquiry can also be an exercise desirable to justify a course of action already predetermined but not yet divulged or implemented. It seems, however, fair to me to assume that, in the Canadian tradition and in the public's mind, royal commissions are primarily thought of as instruments of social change(s) when major reforms or re-orientations are needed; when risks (political/

electoral) are involved; and when the public must be heard as well as informed.

Today being International Women's Day [March 8], may I remind the audience of the Royal Commission on the Status of Women in Canada (1967-1970), of the success of its report and implementation. I mentioned the Carter Commission on Taxation; unfortunately, like the reports of many other royal commissions, that document and its recommendations were shelved. By contrast, following the Report on Women's publication, governments — the federal government as well as the provinces — were in competition for who would implement what first, and, although several of its recommendations were not implemented, the Report has played a key role in the profound changes we are still witnessing throughout the country in reaching out for gender equity and for simple justice.

There is no particular recipe for ensuring a successful report by a royal commission. To the contrary. The great vulnerability of royal commissions — due to their very nature as temporary, ad hoc, high-intensity, project-driven organizations which start from scratch — is now becoming well documented. "Our" royal commission did not escape numerous and major constraints from birth, if not from conception and before!

Historians may elect, in future years, to study the origins of the Royal Commission on Learning, but I will take the risk now to suggest a few research hypotheses. (You realize that it is the more dangerous since I belong to a different political party!) I believe that the need for in-depth educational reforms had been identified by the then-Minister and his Ministry in the years 1991/1992. Actions were attempted, and at least one memorandum went to Cabinet, to no avail. Either education was simply not on the political agenda or the debate had become very heated

and Cabinet was divided about the course of action suggested, or both. It will be interesting to learn how comprehensive and integrated — or incrementalist or fragmented — the recommendations of that Cabinet memorandum were. The succeeding Minister of Education, Dave Cooke, was in turn briefed and appraised of the situation when he took office. (Had he received a special mandate from the Premier? We do not know at this point.) He soon must have witnessed the growing public dissatisfaction with the school system. At about the same time, in February 1993, the MET went through a major restructuring — combining with the Ministry of Education that of Colleges and Universities, and that of Manpower Training — and the whole Ministry was quite destabilized for months after. A content analysis of the media coverage of educa-

tion would not allow any significant original research program — the trademark of good royal commissions. The last blow came ten weeks after the Commission's creation, when our then Executive Director was called back to MET. For a while, the Commission seemed doomed to fail; everything was going wrong. This is the context against which today's great success should be assessed.

What, then, did happen in the course of the months that followed, between September, 1993 and the end of December, 1994? From the very first meetings of the Commissioners, in the spring 1993, we discussed between ourselves how to bring about changes to social systems, and in this case, to the educational system — a complex entity including distinct, powerful players not necessarily sharing a common objective. Very early in the game, knowing we would be confronted with a provincial election at some point close to the tabling of our report, we identified the need to mobilize the public and to do everything possible to have the public first, and the stakeholders second, take ownership of our report and of its recommendations. We also determined we wanted a report that was comprehensive, in-depth, but doable. It was very clear to me that politicians do not act if they don't perceive a public demand, and this fear of action increases with the complexity of the portfolio at stake. Education, like health, had all the elements for lots of rhetoric and no action: powerful and vocal constituencies, strong emotional individual reactions often translated into clichés and preconceived ideas, contradicting demands, expensive needs, and so on. The best, and the only, insurance for future action on our report we could “buy” (on which we could possibly act) lay in a mobilized public and interested stakeholders demanding implementation of the report from the government. That informed our own work from day one. We did our share, helped by the media, whose attitude changed from negative to positive during the public hearings in the fall of 1993. Somehow we succeeded, through our style of interacting with the partners and with students and other young people, in gaining the trust of stakeholders, and in creating credibility for the Commission. Education as a subject of public interest then captured the

public's imagination and the media's attention.

We can say, in all modesty, that we raised the profile of education in the province. A true, sustained, public debate took place in Ontario. This in turn made education a possible candidate for a political platform. At one point, in the fall of

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1994, I realized that the government was ready to make education a major theme, eventually a central theme, of its coming electoral campaign. It will be interesting to understand the dynamics of that decision, if only because of the risks involved in the eyes of traditional political strategists, whatever the party, to focus on such a risky and “soft” issue.

While unfolding this drama, I have not yet mentioned the part played by the civil servants and by faculties of education and universities generally. During the course of our work, civil servants in the Ministry were still going through a major reorganization. I cannot assess at this point in time the strong points and the weak ones in our relationship, or non-relationship — a royal commission being usually completely autonomous from the government that created it. Obviously, the Deputy Minister and some ADMs in particular — I am thinking here of Jill Hutcheon, our former Executive Director for a short while — played a proactive part in deciding how best to use our Report and recommendations. I understand that committees studying possible future action were set up in the MET even before the Report was completed. This is of course unheard

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tional issues during the same period would probably reveal a state of crisis of some proportion in public opinion in the months immediately preceding the creation of the Royal Commission. The government and the new Minister, not to say the new Ministry, might have felt that they needed to buy some time to sort out what had to be done. Whatever the exact motives, a Royal Commission on Learning was announced on May 4, 1993. At about the same time, the Social Contract was also announced.

The public and the media consequently greeted the creation of the Commission with total cynicism. They considered the Commission a delaying tactic and a cheap palliative to action. A media clippings review establishes this clearly. As for organized teaching, it would have nothing to do with a Commission borne out of the same government — “their” government — that had invented, and was imposing, the Social Contract. Then it became clear that the Commission's

of. I can only praise all involved for the fastest reaction I have ever seen following a report on such a complex issue.

As to universities and faculties of education, they were very co-operative. Collectively, they prepared and presented briefs to us, while individual professors gave us expert opinions, discussed with us, and helped our small research team. In the case of OISE/UT, for example, they let us have their great Nancy Watson and, a little later, George Bedard. (These institutions were also the first to organize a series of discussions on the Commission Report.)

In other words, there was only so much the Commission could do to ensure implementation of its Report. We were conscious of that challenge since the beginning and we adopted a proactive attitude at every stage of our operations. The rest is luck, great timing, partners who gave a fair consideration to our Report, serious media coverage (speaking of the media coverage of the Report since January 26, an assessment of printed and electronic media found only 1 percent negative coverage, an extraordinarily positive reaction), and, of course, political will — that unspecified ingredient which can do so much for reform.

Let us now reflect on the steps that have been taken and/or announced in the past five weeks. First a word on the process and the announcement strategy adopted by the Minister. I won't surprise anyone if I recognize it as highly political and electoralist! Nothing wrong with that in itself; education, like health, is quite political in a democratic society. However, the speed and the fragmentation of the announcements might become problematic. Some might have preferred a different strategy, one by which the Minister and the MET, after taking the time needed — a month or two for example — would have made one major speech or statement only, expressing focus and priorities, coupled with the creation of a clear mechanism for implementing the Report. The current piecemeal approach cast the stakeholders and the concerned public in a passive role; they have not been consulted and find themselves awaiting the weekly "next announcement." Only time will tell.

As to the content of the government's announcements, the missing link is clearly that of an Implementation Commission similar (or not) to the one recom-

mended in the last chapter of the Report (Volume 4, recommendation 167), which follows our strong plea for how to bring about changes to the educational system. The absence of such an implementation body is particularly critical in this pre-election time, particularly if we want the Report to survive the impending electoral campaign without too much damage to educational reforms. An implementation mechanism is also key in order for the reforms to be easily perceived and understood by all concerned. We had set the following characteristics as being essential for the Implementation Commission:

- it should be independent from the Ministry and from the government, which should also be the subject of reforms, although the Commission should work with them
- it should be used for accountability purposes regarding the implementation of the reforms
- it should have a clear and limited time frame (we recommended that it be in existence for three years)
- it should report twice a year to the Legislature

The in-house approach adopted so far is not appropriate for the circumstances and it is not, based on the Commissioners' collective past experience, the best way to bring about educational reforms.

Many of the orientations announced by the Minister or by the Premier are good decisions, and they have been made at the speed of light. Some important areas of reforms, however, have not yet even been mentioned. Rethinking high schools in terms of size, curriculum, institutional culture, and organization is one such "forgotten" key point for reform of both learning and teaching. Of the announcements made to date, three are problematic in varying degrees:

1. The parents councils, as announced, are pure politics! Their creation does not seem to completely preclude, however, the development of school community councils — an essential element of educational reform.
2. The initiative for significantly reducing the number of schoolboards is even more electoralist! The Minister and the Royal Commission have always differed on this and we agreed to disagree long ago.

3. The "killing" of early childhood education is the one decision I find very difficult to accept. To base such a decision on a few focus groups showing little support for ECE when the Report was only three weeks old is an escape from policy and political leadership. The consequences of not having school readiness programs for small children become insurmountable as they get older. This decision also amounts to a major disservice to the Franco-Ontarian community.

Having made these specific observations on key recommendations, I have to note that the public in general — and the stakeholders in particular — seem very pleased with the Report and appreciate

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the government's initiatives towards its implementation.

The prospects for reform started on the right foot, with all-party support for the recommendations, but the critical time still lies ahead. I will conclude with the following remarks. Surviving the electoral campaign and the election will create the first serious challenge for the Report and the future of educational reform. The sustainability of the reforms over a longer period of time — our four engines of change are long-term recommendations — is another challenge in need of structural support. Finally, implementation procedures, guidelines, regulations, and the like usually introduce major distortions to the objectives of reform; they call for a constant monitoring and questioning of the actions taken. The public and the partners in education are the best guarantee against these various obstacles. They can overcome them if they keep returning to one standard of measurement: How will this help the students' learning and the teachers' teaching?

Ontario's Education Revolution

Prospects for Implementation

GERALD CAPLAN

Co-Chair, Royal Commission on Learning

I want to join those who have already congratulated OISE for this important forum series. I don't know what links OISE has to the government of Ontario, but even five weeks ago, the list of participants included Joan Green, Margaret Wilson, and Michael Fullan — all of whom emerged as big winners in the employment sweepstakes out of the education reform. I don't know who knew any of that — I certainly didn't — but I think that it made the series even more important since we are hearing things from the horse's mouth, as it were. It's also a moment for me to convey to Angela Hildyard and to all the other OISE faculty that the Commission benefited enormously from the work of George Bedard, a student in OISE's Department of Educational Administration, who studied our processes and our hearings from beginning to end and who became a close member of our team. I hope you will attach someone to Michael Fullan and the Ministry and have someone study this remarkable implementation process that's now been launched.

I share with Monique B  gin the sense of being overwhelmed by what's happened to our work. Towards the end of our work, Nancy Watson, one of our senior researchers, did a terrific first draft of the implementation chapter, and we went over it. We spent weeks and weeks of work on how to prevent our Report from gathering dust on the shelf. Well, it doesn't seem to be our greatest single problem at the moment. In fact, the sense of being overwhelmed must surely be shared by the province and it will become one of the problems of implementation. To use John Evans's word, an education "revolution" has been launched in this province, and whatever else happens, I don't think this

a process that can be stopped. Happily, we know that the other political parties largely support the initiatives that this government has taken, and I suspect both of them will continue the process if they have their chance.

As you know, Lloyd Dennis came to talk to us at our request. He recalled that there was never an official response to his report by the government of the day, but that by his own calculation about a third of his recommendations were implemented, a third were ignored completely, and a third were implemented in a way that, as far as he was concerned, was unrecognizable. I wanted to use the "one third, one third, one third" as my yardstick to look at the initiatives that have been begun by Dave Cooke and this

Lloyd Dennis recalled that there was never an official response to his report by the government of the day.

government so far. I think four have been simply wonderful, whereas several others depart from our intentions.

First of all, the initiative on teachers, teacher development, teacher upgrading, and two-year teacher training is terrific. It is exciting beyond words, as Rob Prichard has already indicated, that faculties are ready to move on it. I think most teachers now know that there will not be any sit-down exam after five years, on which they all will be graded as to whether they're allowed to have a career. None of that will happen. I guess the world will get over the distortions

that a certain newspaper likes to make in its editorials about the new College of Teachers being a nice place to discipline all those lousy teachers out there. This is a major, major distortion of what's happening in our teaching profession. It is also very disheartening that the Ontario Secondary School Teachers' Federation has rejected so much of this initiative. I only hope that Margaret Wilson, in whom I have great confidence, instills in the secondary school teachers that same kind of confidence about implementation as several speakers have pointed out is required. In the massive bureaucratic world of education, we need co-operation from virtually all parties involved and all the teachers must be onside.

Regarding the second announcement, on Early Childhood Education (ECE), I agree entirely on principle that three-year olds going to school would be a revolutionary breakthrough. Nevertheless, the decision to tighten up, to make more rigorous JK and K — which in many parts of the province either barely exist or exist as little more than child care — is a major contribution to early childhood education and school readiness programs. I applaud the Ministry on that. I have no trouble personally with the decision not to move ahead with three-year-olds, given the highly unexpected, negative reaction to what we thought was a proposal bordering on simple common sense. For the Conservatives to say that ECE is not a helpful move at this time, allow me to say that I'm singularly disappointed.

I was thrilled with last week's announcements on information technology and computerization. Not only is it sensible but it follows each part of our proposal, including, not the least important, the retraining of teachers so that they can cope with this new tool. I thought it was sensitive and terrific, and it works through business partnerships, which is the only possible way it will happen.

And finally, I applaud happily the changes to the curriculum that the Minister announced. I guess it was the very first announcement. Like us, I think he means something somewhat different from what he has said about centralizing the development of curriculum. We did not mean that there should be 100 people sitting down at the Mowat Block writing curriculum that will be followed mindlessly by teachers all over the province.

We meant it should be co-ordinated through the Mowat Block but should use the resources of all the wonderful curriculum experts that exist across the province. Further, I'm not sure we were as clear as we should've been that when we talked about a common curriculum we meant common concepts, common principles. None of us thought for a second that my son in Ottawa and a kid in Thunder Bay had to learn exactly the same geography or exactly the same history or exactly the same plants and animals. The sense that we have a rigid, tight curriculum for every kid in the province is, I think, not what the Ministry meant and certainly not what we meant.

Now, as Lenin learned, revolutions are not easy; some of them are even flawed from time to time. At least two of the recommendations that the Minister has moved on have an emphasis different from what we meant. First, I don't think any of us thought it was one of the great lacks in Ontario that we weren't the "testingest" province in the whole universe, and becoming the testingest province in the whole universe is not what we wanted. I fear that by emphasizing these four standardized province-wide tests, the Minister feeds a public misconception, as Lorna Earl said, that somehow or other there's a magic in doing tests. And there isn't. I wish the Minister had emphasized that the best evaluator in the whole world is your child's teacher, and a properly trained teacher is better than all the tests in the world. But a properly trained teacher will be happy to have a supplement of the kind of tests that will be introduced. My son, who's going into Grade 9 next year, where there will be these new tests, is already worrying about them. But he's not worried about what's going to be in such tests; he's just worried about how he's going to do on them. It has nothing to do with learning; it has to do with passing. So exactly the syndrome that made Grade 13 such an uneducational nightmare when I went through it is potentially at work again in these new tests. What gives me hope, frankly, is Joan Green. I personally have so much regard for her, that I am sure that the new office that she will run will find a way to do these tests in a way that is thoughtful and that evaluates, as she herself said, the complex process and the quality of learning.

The second area where I feel there is a serious difference in emphasis is the school councils. There are 5000 schools in the province. The school councils that the Minister is going to insist be set up will have, say, ten parents involved in each school. We'll get, maybe, 50,000 parents involved, a highly optimistic figure but let's say it. Since there are 2,000,000 school kids, we can calculate that there's 4,000,000 parents, and so the other 3,950,000 are ignored so far by the Ministry. The most important research

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finding — we said over and over again — is the vital role each individual parent can play in the life of each individual kid. And that's been missing so far from the Minister's announcement. Further, we said that the problem in schools is not that parents weren't available to help principals work out budgets and who they should hire, but that teachers had burdens that they couldn't handle. What these councils were meant to do was to go out in the community and bring the community into the school to lift those burdens from teachers so they could do their main job, which is teaching academic competence. Neither that role for parents nor that role for the community plays anything other than a marginal role in the announcement that the Minister made about his school councils. I think that that's not the right emphasis.

Then there's a recommendation that, as Monique has already said, the Minister knew we would disagree with — and we have disagreed with — and that's amalgamation of boards. The issue for me is not the question of whether there should be a 170 or 100 or 1000 boards; the issue is the change process. Here I learn again from Michael Fullan. Managing change, managing the startling amount of change that the Minister has launched in the last five weeks is going to be something of a nightmare. There's only so much energy out there. If I were the Minister, why would I antagonize 2500 angry trustees, all of them now worrying about whether they're going to

disappear in the next year or so, when what I really need is boards of education everywhere in the province working locally to implement the province-wide changes in each school? It's a very big implementation problem and if I were him, I would want every trustee and every administrator and every school board in this province to work night and day to implement my reforms, not to be terrified of them.

One idea that we never had quite as a recommendation, but I hope was seen as a theme throughout the Report, and I think has not been emphasized in any of the Minister's speeches is what I've called the "Willy Loman Effect" — the need to individualize as much as possible the attention that's paid to every single kid in the school system. We know classes aren't going to get any smaller. People asked us why we didn't recommend smaller classes, and our answer was simply there's not a chance of a snowball in hell of that happening in the foreseeable financial climate. But we do recommend any number of ways that more individual attention can be paid to every kid: from the kid having a teacher advisor throughout his or her years in the same school to peer and cross-age tutoring done properly. Nothing, in my view, will reduce the dropout rate more than individual attention being paid to kids at risk of dropping out. I know nothing makes my kid happier than when the teacher has a moment to pay a little bit of individual attention to him. We know perfectly well the teacher says, "Hey, I've got 250 kids, how much time can I have?" There are ways to do it, and we made recommendations throughout the Report, and I hope the minister picks those up.

Finally, then, another Michael Fullan lesson to us is that it is a long, long road from the announcement by a minister to what happens to our kids in their classroom. A lot of things can happen along the way. There is still time to make it even better than it's been at the moment. There is time to take Lloyd Dennis's "a third, a third, a third" and make it closer to two-and-a-half thirds, as it were. Perfect revolutions seem to be hard to come by in this world. It's wildly gratifying to have done so well, but we could do even better and I hope in the time to come, the Minister, the government, and their implementation people, and Joan Green and Margaret Wilson make it even better than the announcements so far.

Moving from the Political to the Practical

A Hard Look at Assessment and Accountability

LORNA M. EARL

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Scarborough Board of Education

I'd like to begin by thanking the Commissioners for the way they have framed the issues that confront education in Ontario today. A year ago, I would have said it was impossible to offer a position that would bridge the enormous gaps and lack of consensus that were emerging in the hearings. So — although I'm sure you've heard it before — congratulations for giving us a readable, insightful, and engaging document as a starting point for our conversations about education in this province. Just as an aside for those of you who have read only the recommendations or just the short version: you may have caught the essence of the Report but you can't get the spirit of it without reading the complete text. It should be required reading for *anyone* who has an interest in education.

I have conceptualized my task in this paper as one of looking long and hard at the material, specifically about accountability and about assessment, and moving from the political to the practical. I've tried to imagine what all of this might look like as we try to implement it. We all know from past experience that the best laid plans can go awry in the implementation, and I've tried to identify some of the problems we might face as we travel the road that the Minister has charted — a road that extends even beyond the recommendations of the Royal Commission.

As a researcher and assessment specialist, I have spent a lot of time in the past few years trying to become as knowledgeable and being as analytical as I can about the issues surrounding accountability. My goal for myself has been very simple — to study what has

been happening around the world and to learn from the mistakes of others so that I can anticipate the pitfalls that may loom for us in Ontario and try to avoid them if possible.

So, as we embark on the most ambitious assessment and accountability program that has ever existed in Ontario, I want to challenge readers to think long and hard about three very fundamental issues:

- What is accountability?
- What is assessment for? What is its purpose? and
- How much do we really know, as a culture, about interpreting and using statistics?

What is Accountability?

Accountability has become the watchword of the 90s but I'm not at all sure that we know what it means. My sense is that the realities of economic and political uncertainty, as well as genuine anxiety about students' well-being, have contributed to a climate of concern about the quality of education. People who care about their children, their schools, and about the province and the country want to be reassured about the Ontario education system. The concern that is expressed often gets coupled with a belief that if only schools and those who teach in them were more accountable, the problems would be resolved. But what does "being accountable" mean? It is an emotionally charged term that, on the surface, one might say is the reaction of a cranky public who feel shut out. And that's true. They have been given very little information — good or bad — and, in the absence of information, are coming to the conclusion that schools are in trouble. They want evidence from us that their investment is paying off and that their children will be

okay in the future. So, there is a cry for accountability, but there is no blueprint of actual behaviours or practices.

I'd like to take a stab at defining accountability or at least clarifying what it is and is not. As I analyse it, at the heart of the accountability relationship are two elements — responsibility (legal or moral) and entitlement. Someone is responsible and someone is entitled. We need to decide who is responsible, for what, to whom. But the question remains: What do we have to do to be accountable? I think the question is relatively simple to answer and very difficult to do. In order to be accountable we need to provide quality information in ways that can be understood. What makes this difficult is that different audiences need very different information.

Taxpayers need information to ensure themselves that the schools are living up to their expectations. The information that they need is about schools and schools systems and can include things like: How is the school system funded? What programs and services are available? How are the financial resources spent? How safe are the schools? How well are the students collectively achieving? How successful are our students when they leave school?

Parents and students, on the other hand, need information in order to make life decisions. They want to know things like: What are the school's expectations? What is the school doing to help my child reach those expectations? How well is my child doing? What should we be doing to help?

Some of the information needs are very personal; they have to do with decisions that parents and students and teachers are trying to make about individual students. Then there are the information needs that require composite information; they have to do with schools and school systems. So, before we can begin, we need to be clear about who our audience is because, as I have said, different audiences need very different information.

Just having information doesn't make us accountable. Accountability is not tests; it is not indicators; it is not dropout rates; it is not financial reports; and it's not a common report card. The results of tests or dropout rates or any other pertinent information may constitute the information that guides the discussion. But accountability depends on the estab-

lishment of dialogue and debate. The essence of accountability is good communication and genuine respect. I don't care how much data we have to share. Public confidence will not increase without open, responsive, and regular vehicles for communication. This, by the way, is just as true for teachers in the classroom as for the provincial government or for school systems like the one I work for. I can't help wondering, sometimes, how much anxiety we would have about education if the accountability relationships were well established at the level of individual teachers, students, and parents. I hope we don't lose the will to improve that conversation in our rush to implement province-wide structures.

So, accountability, as I see it, involves trust, shared understanding, and mutual support — not just information.

What Is Assessment For? What Is Its Purpose?

The Minister has already decided that we will undertake assessments of every student in Ontario schools in Grades 3, 6, 9, and 11 in reading, writing, and mathematics every year. We're not sure what these assessments will look like and, as I see it, we need to make some decisions very early on to guide how we proceed. Unfortunately, the debate about testing has often been so emotional that a lot of energy has been spent on fruitless activity, either defending or condemning testing, rather than on inventing new solutions. And that is what it's going to take. Searching for ways to measure, report, and talk about student achievement is a worldwide phenomenon at the moment, and our time can be most profitably spent engaged in this global discussion — learning from it and contributing to its advancement — not jumping to simplistic solutions that have already been unsuccessful elsewhere. We are at a turning point in Ontario. We can leapfrog the mistakes that have already been made in other places or we can laboriously repeat them and waste valuable time. And we are in a position of advantage because we have very few preconceived notions about what the assessments we use must look like and we have a long history of anchoring assessment firmly in curriculum and classroom practice.

So, here's the crux of the matter: How do we measure student achievement in order to be accountable to all of our

diverse audiences? And the answer is: we're not sure yet but it's quite clear that there is no one way and we will regret it if we put too much weight on a single approach. As a colleague of mine once wrote: "Relying on only one assessment procedure is like using a hammer to do everything from brain surgery to pile driving." Before we begin along the road to create these large-scale assessments, we need a very clear idea of their purpose and of the audience for the results.

There is a general naivete in our culture about the meaning of numbers and about the objectivity of statistics.

Why? Because the purpose of an assessment drives how it is designed and carried out.

So, to put this in practical terms, let me ask the question about one of the proposed assessments — the Grade 3 assessment in mathematics. What is it for? I can't, in my wildest dreams, imagine that we intend to use a single assessment with 25 or 30 items on it to make life decisions like promotion or placement about nine-year olds. That's as ludicrous as deciding my future based on one public speech or making decisions about the quality of your golf game on the basis of one nine-hole round of golf. I suspect that the intent is much more likely to be gathering information that will help teachers and parents decide how best to instruct and guide each child so that his or her learning is enhanced. And if that is the case, perhaps we need to plan carefully and have a close look at the assessment model that is used in the French National Assessment. In France, the instruments are diagnostic and help teachers to identify the concepts or skills that students are missing; the tests are administered early in the school year rather than at the end when there is no time left to address the problems; teachers are given solid training in how to use the information that comes from the test; and, perhaps most importantly, the test forms the basis for discussion between

the teacher and the parents right from the beginning of the year. Although the availability of such information has provoked considerable media interest, the government has so far resisted pressure for results to be made public. The primary purpose of this assessment is to provide formative information to teachers and parents in order to serve students and to improve their learning. And, obviously, this purpose has profound effects on how the assessment is designed and carried out.

Before we begin developing any of the assessments, let's get our purposes clear.

My final point is kind of scary for me, because I'm not sure that we can find a satisfactory way of handling it. The question I pose is this: How much do we know, as a culture, about using and interpreting statistics? It is likely that a whole series of quality indicators, and that includes composite test scores, will be developed as ways of communicating with the public about education. Assuming that we can actually put together the data that we need to create these indicators, I worry about how they will be understood and used. There is a general naivete in our culture about the meaning of numbers and about the objectivity of statistics. The media often talk about how illiterate we are, even though there is considerable evidence of Ontario's population being highly literate. What rarely gets mentioned is innumeracy. And I contend that, as a culture, we are incredibly innumerate. Very few people have a genuine understanding of mathematics and how it works. I suspect most readers have completed their required mathematics courses by memorizing algorithms and following the rules but how many are comfortable picking up a mathematics problem and trying to reason their way through it? None of us would ever publicly announce that we couldn't read. That's shameful. But many of us, even with a hint of pride, admit to our mathematical shortcomings. Well, that's the scary part, because indicators are statistics; they are mathematically derived composite measures that take information from a variety of sources and turn it into numbers. But they aren't magic and they don't exist as entities on their own. They are constructed as mathematical representations of the world around us. So, here's the paradox. We live in a culture that has come to

value and depend on statistical information to inform our decisions, but it is a culture that is likely to misunderstand and misuse those statistics because we are "statistically illiterate." And if that's the case, we have to be very careful how we report the information. If we're going to invest the time and money into developing indicators, we have to be just as attentive to how they are communicated.

With an audience that is largely statistically illiterate, we need to find ways to present the information and provide the range of possible interpretations so that it is very difficult to distort.

So, there you have it. For the first time in the 20-plus years that I have been involved in practical educational research, there is a real demand for the kind of information that I believe can lead to bet-

ter decisions for our kids. But the stakes are high, and there are many pitfalls to be avoided. I hope I've provided a taste of the kind of careful thinking that we have to do to make this enterprise truly useful and, particularly, to ensure that what we do will not only result in genuine accountability but will always be directed at the ultimate purpose — enhancing education and learning for our students.

Bringing Education from the Margins to the Centre of the University

The Work of Implementation

J. ROBERT S. PRICHARD

President, University of Toronto

We have seen quite a remarkable series of events surrounding the work of the Royal Commission on Learning. Its results have been received with acclaim across the spectrum, with all-party support for moving ahead and for government action. I can't remember a commission which has seen a more rapid, focussed, or energetic response by a minister and a ministry taking seriously its recommendations. But that said, the real work of implementation now lies ahead and it's going to be harder work than any of us have really contemplated in the first rush of enthusiasm. In addressing the Prospects for Reform, I will offer a very brief appraisal and speak to the university's role in what lies ahead.

In terms of the universities, we have more than our share to do in contributing to this overall effort of leadership and reform in education. Narrowly we have two specific tasks. The first is to introduce two-year teacher education programs. The Ministry has invited universities with teacher education faculties to bring forward pilot proposals for September, 1995, and virtually all the universities of Ontario with teacher education faculties have responded to the Ministry's invitation. That's clear evidence of the desire of the universities to

be part of moving ahead. It's clear evidence also of the breadth of support for the notion of two-year teacher education programs. We will see a diversity of approaches to implementing the two-year teacher education program, and that's the way it should be. This diversity of pilots will lead to more innovation, more experimentation, and over the long haul, greater strength.

Our second task is to work with the new College of Teachers. This is going

I can't remember a commission which has seen a more rapid, focussed, or energetic response.

to be an important relationship for the universities. Again, I am very optimistic about this effort, as I believe we can proceed with a sense of mutual support and co-operation. Frank Clifford and Margaret Wilson, who are charged with the leadership of this task, have already signalled their desire to make it work in partnership with the universities. Some believe this relationship will founder on

the issue of university autonomy. It could but it need not. I believe there is room for a very co-operative effort informed by the best practices in other professions in both Ontario and beyond in bringing together the professionalization aspects of the college and the academic responsibilities of the university.

The broader agenda, however, is to bring the discipline of education to the centre of the university. At too many universities, our own included, education has been at the margin geographically and, often, academically. Education hasn't been viewed as one of the central disciplines of the universities. I believe the time for that to change is now. The cause of education will be much advanced by moving it as a discipline to the centre of the university, where it can not only be proud on its own terms but where it can also draw strength from and be informed by the full range of resources of a major university.

For the University of Toronto, this is our broader goal and, over the long term, it may prove more significant than the two-year teacher education program or the relationship with the College of Teachers. I believe we're uniquely equipped to embark on this goal at the University of Toronto as a result of the merger of the Faculty of Education and the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education. I believe the integrated faculty gives us the real possibility that within the University, education will take its place with medicine, engineering, law and management, as the central professional disciplines. I hope we can make the University of Toronto one of the finest centres for the pursuit of the discipline of education anywhere in the world. If we succeed in doing this, and we are determined to do so, the lasting contribution to reform in education will be very substantial.

Continuous Improvement in Schools

Implementing the Commission's Recommendations

JOHN R. EVANS

Chair, Torstar Corporation

The Royal Commission on Learning has produced an excellent report. It is a powerful document which must be strong enough to launch and sustain an ongoing process of continuous improvement in schools. The challenge now is implementation. Experience with previous reports in education and health and with change in the private sector illustrates how formidable a challenge implementation of change is in large complex organizations.

The Commission noted the intense diversity of viewpoints held by different constituencies. Part of the challenge, therefore, is to develop processes which unite rather than polarize the groups who can contribute to successful implementation. In addressing the challenge of implementation, two principles have emerged: first, the need to select a few of the most important objectives on which to concentrate the bulk of energy and effort, and second, to identify barriers to the success of the change process and determine ways in which they can be minimized.

In preparing this paper, I had to reach out to others closer to the education scene on the questions of primary focus for change and principle barriers to implementation. My mini-Royal Commission was based on telephone inquiries made primarily through an independent pollster to representatives in the categories of ministry, board, principal, teacher, parent, grandparent, student, and educational grant-maker. Lack of rigour and statistically significant numbers do not inhibit me from reporting my conclusions as incontrovertible truths!

The survey revealed surprising conformity of opinion that schools, as recommended by the Commission, should be the primary focus for change and that

the principle driving forces were school reorganization and teacher education, particularly in-service professional development.

On the question of barriers to implementation, opinion was much more diverse. The barriers cited were:

- lack of autonomy at the school level to organize the change process and free itself of perceived constraints imposed by other levels and groups in the system; examples cited were centrally determined curriculum, bureaucratic limits on use of time, seniority provisions, pressure from special-interest groups, and rigid collective agreements which restrict effective use of resources
- fragmentation of efforts caused by trying to launch too many initiatives at once; examples cited as distractions from the main task of improving the learning environment for students within the schools were coping with the implications of new province-wide structures, reorganized school boards, the multitude of social problems affecting students, and efforts to get parent councils underway
- lack of capacity at the school level to make sweeping changes in a short time-frame and inflexibility of the structural organization which limits effective use of time; lack of time was singled out — lack of time for teachers to think about their work, examine other practices, and learn to work together collegially
- professional development of principals and teachers; many are handicapped in responding to the Commission's challenge by lack of specific knowledge and skills and lack of understanding of how to contribute differently in order to restructure the school as a learning organization; they are frustrated by lack of resources and time to rectify the deficiencies and do not consider most of the

professional development opportunities available to be "really meaningful professional growth experiences"; on top of this, the system is not perceived as rewarding risk taking

- professional morale — many teachers are tired of criticism, cynical about reforms, overwhelmed by the new social problems they have to cope with, and frustrated by a sense of powerlessness to make changes which they see are needed
- compartmentalization of education into subjects in high school which reflect more the interest of teachers than the learning needs of students; this leaves out much that doesn't fit and prevents people from seeing the larger picture
- variable quality of administrators and teachers: the system promotes some people to administrative positions who are not really suitable nor competent; "teacher protection" prevents dealing with incompetent teachers
- lack of understanding of information technology and unease with its use; the contrast is striking with four- and five-year olds playing word games and using Encarta to enlarge their vocabulary
- disconnection of schools from their wider communities
- fragmentation of social services needed to support schools
- fear of media attention
- lack of public support; not mentioned by survey respondents, but a major obstacle to sustained progress is the attitude of so many of us — members of the lay public and self-appointed experts on education — who are slow to understand, quick to criticize, impatient for the narrow fix, and unaware of the magnitude and complexity of the task; the media too often reflect our views

The experience of major initiatives in educational reform in the United States over the past ten years supports the view of the Royal Commission that "because schools are the heart of the educational system, they must be the centre of change in education." The record of these initiatives, however, shows that failure is common. Research reports identify certain characteristics that favour success.

First is the need for clear vision and a statement of purpose which focusses on making changes in the curriculum and in instructional process to improve student learning-performance. Without this, the change process may be derailed by other agendas.

Second is the need for a high level of understanding and commitment to the vision on the part of the majority (some say as high as 90 percent) of the teaching staff of the school as well as students and their parents. There needs to be a strong consensus and a will to make the changes work, because along the way some won't.

A third characteristic of success is wide participation of school staff in the decision making on planning and implementing changes, backed up by wide dissemination of information about the changes throughout the school and to parents and the community.

Commitment by the higher levels of the educational bureaucracy to provide a combination of real authority to restruc-

— rather than spectators — in the process.

If these are some of the conditions for success observed in similar systems, how can we overcome the barriers to implementation of the Commission's recommendations cited by the respondents to my mini-survey?

School Autonomy and Back-Up

Can the Ministry and the school boards make *explicit* the mandate for individual schools to take the leadership in the change process; release schools from regulatory constraints and budgetary rigidities which currently are perceived to limit their sense of ownership and of the change process; and back the schools with "supportive non-interference" by providing encouragement, networking among schools, and technical and financial resources to facilitate the change process?

Can the teachers' federations of Ontario, in the same spirit, accept that school-based learning as practised in the most successful schools is very much in the interests of its constituency and consequently relax restrictions which impede flexibility and deployment of teaching resources, differential staffing, and organizational change? Can they actively support processes which foster sustained "meaningful professional growth of their members" so they can collaborate fully in shaping the emerging learning community? Can the federations match with action the strong 1992 commitment of OTF to "create a culture of change in which changes in curriculum would be led by teachers as a group"?

School Capacity for Reform

Given relaxation of external constraints, can schools themselves deliver the goods? Can they mobilize the commitment to make the sweeping organizational changes necessary to improve the teaching and learning environment for their students? To be successful, they must overcome the cynicism about educational reform and the aversion to risk taking; mobilize the unexpressed talents within each school; achieve the fundamental change in culture of the school that will foster a change in attitudes and behaviour, encourage learning of new roles and skills, and launch a school-wide collaboration rather than a competi-

tion of special interest and power groups; and accept that change in educational organizations must be a continuous process not only for renewal of the school as a learning community but also for the ongoing self-renewal of individual teachers.

Are there enough sensitive and visionary principals to give the type of leadership necessary to change the culture of the school, achieve broad participation in the leadership process, and create trust and confidence in the process? If not, how can the deficiency be rectified promptly?

Incremental Resources

Can the changes in individual schools be achieved without incremental resources in this period of public-sector financial constraint? The primary challenge will be to find ways to adapt the resources currently available. Possible routes might be to reduce or eliminate low-priority programs, adopt new instructional approaches which free up teachers' time, use assistants and volunteers for non-academic tasks, and mobilize the untapped potential of students to share in the educational reform process.

While the principal investment must come from the schools' existing resources, schools with a plan should be assisted by boards to obtain technical help, process coaching, and extra staff development to enable communication and sharing of experiences with other schools in their network. School boards might consider these additional expenditures as capital investments rather than as increases in operating budget.

Faculties of Education

Most faculties face the same challenge of cultural transformation as the schools themselves. They too need a faculty-wide collaborative culture which is uncharacteristic of universities but necessary to create the appropriate learning environment for future pre- and in-service training of teachers.

This model will be particularly important in the structure of the pre-service internship experience, which in medicine evolved from cheap labour for hospitals to an important practical learning experience under the supervision of master teachers.

Can one envisage a special-resource

Successful initiatives have strong leadership from the principal as chief facilitator of the change process and the full involvement of students, their parents, and their communities....

ture the curriculum, flexibility in the use of budgetary resources, and technical and financial assistance for professional and curriculum development also favour successful change initiatives.

Success is favoured where the boards can also play a major role in facilitating networking among the schools and supporting operational research on the change process and learning impact.

Successful initiatives have strong leadership from the principal as chief facilitator of the change process and the full involvement of students, their parents, and their communities as partners

unit in each regional faculty of education to meet the technical assistance challenges in both the faculty and neighbouring schools? Its responsibilities, among others, might include: assembling up-to-date knowledge and talent relevant to the school-reform tasks; mobilizing outside help from elsewhere in the university and the community; and working actively in partnership with individual schools on the practical tasks of implementing the learning community and reflecting the lessons back into faculty programs.

The necessary investment to assemble the talents for the special-resource units would have a very high-priority claim on incremental or reallocated resources from boards and the Ministry.

The special-resource units might also design or co-ordinate evaluation and action research and synthesize and publicize results to inform educational decision-making.

The health sector, overwhelmed by the excitement of biomedical research, neglected until very recently this type of research necessary for evidence-based decisions on medical interventions and programs. The result was wasted resources and, in some cases, danger to patients from procedures which were neither effective nor efficient. In the changing educational environment, it is equally important to rigorously evaluate interventions and to share results in order to reinforce basic professional purpose and guide wise program and policy decisions.

Research

Does the current educational research effort in Ontario meet this need? Is it sufficiently action-oriented to be useful to the schools? Does it inform the schools about student needs and career paths and community expectations? Is some of the research participatory to engage those who should use the results? Do all schools and faculties have access to this type of research or is it only in the most affluent areas?

There is a tendency to look on research as a luxury but, as David Osborne and Ted Gaebler in *Re-inventing Government* note, "what gets measured gets done" and "if you don't measure results you can't tell success from failure."

No modern army would march into battle without military intelligence. Local capacity for evaluation and action

research to produce "educational intelligence" is an essential resource for schools to transform themselves into learning communities and to make the most effective use of limited resources. This type of research would be a third high priority for productive investment of incremental or reallocated resources from school boards and the Ministry.

Other Engines

The Commission's recommendations on information technology are critically important because of the profound transforming impact of these technologies on how and what we learn and the rapidity of advances in technology. Among the most important benefits is the capacity to individualize learning within a classroom so individual students or small groups can move ahead at a pace which is challenging for them. Interactive techniques facilitate independent and exploratory learning to balance the more structured learning in relation to specific curriculum objectives. For staff, new software permits much more effective management of complex resource-allocation planning and evaluation tasks.

I am equally convinced of the importance of seeing schools become a key focus of developing social capital in partnership with our communities for the benefit of both schools and communities. The work of Dr. James Comer stresses, however, the importance of parent involvement with the teachers, school administrators, and students in achieving superior academic performance, less anti-social behaviour, and fewer dropouts. The School Councils proposed by the Commission could miss a great opportunity to assist schools if they involve only a few of the parents and if they become drawn primarily into political and bureaucratic interactions with the school.

Early childhood learning seems to offer great advantages to the small proportion of children who have the privilege of access to it. If it is not available to all, surely it will be increasingly difficult for others, many of whom come from disadvantaged backgrounds, to catch up to those who have had the privileged head start.

It is tempting to elaborate in-depth on these three important engines of learning development, but in the limited space I have, I have focussed my comments on

the centrepiece of the educational revolution — the school itself.

Mobilizing Support

But the schools cannot do it alone. The Royal Commission has given the process an incredibly strong start. They now need help from every source to remove barriers to implementation and to provide sustained assistance and encouragement. That positive reinforcement can come from the Ministry (appointment of an outstanding individual to lead the implementation process is of special significance); the school boards; local communities; innovations such as The Learning Partnership; business, in the form of resources and technical assistance with the change process; universities, by placing education at the centre of

Providing students with the best possible educational opportunity must rank as one of the most important social and economic investments for contemporary society.

their concerns not just in the priority given to work in their faculties of education; foundations, to support leadership of the change process; and the media by sustaining public interest in and realistic expectations of the reform process.

Providing students with the best possible educational opportunity must rank as one of the most important social and economic investments for contemporary society. If each of us locally would make the effort to understand the vision, bring our special resources and moral support to collaborate with our schools and faculties of education, and become constructive, no-fault partners in the extended learning community, each of us could in some small way help to advance this critically important transformation in partnership with our schools. In so doing, we will change for the better our communities, our own organizations, and grow ourselves.

Improved Accountability

Assessment Needs for the 21st Century

JOAN GREEN

Chief Executive Officer
Education Quality and Accountability Office

There has never been a decade without critics to lash the elementary school for failure to teach the three R's as effectively as in the golden age to which the particular critic belonged. The charge that there has been deterioration is false, unless the school is to be blamed for accepting and retaining all children regardless of ability. It is true, however, that people have been, and still are, by no means as well grounded in fundamentals as political, social, and economic efficiency calls for.

— Hope Commission, 1950

To achieve any meaningful reforms to our learning system, we must help students to be able to learn more and better. To do so involves ensuring that the rest of society helps prepare students for school learning, and that teachers are fully equipped to do the rest.

— Love of Learning, 1995

Our recommendations stress clarity about ends and flexibility about means.

— Love of Learning, 1995

Even though we may feel bewildered by a profusion of reports, analyses, and reform efforts — here and internationally — there is a high degree of consensus in the areas of assessment, evaluation, and accountability: everyone wants more and wants better.

More and better are well within the realm of possibility. Expertise in assessment techniques and effective evaluation designs exists here and elsewhere, and we will draw on that expertise heavily, in the interest of creating clear, sensible, and coherent measures of learning. And we have the wide societal support we need as well, and a strong commitment at the local and provincial levels to the

principle of public accountability for public institutions. It would appear that we have the skill and the will to deliver more and better assessment of students' learning, more and better evaluation of our curricular and co-curricular programs, and more and better public information on both. The challenge — and no one denies that there is a challenge — is neither technical nor political; I would call it metaphysical.

To deal with our growing intolerance for ambiguity, we desire absolutes in a reality in which all is relative. If all we wanted to know were exactly what it is that our children are learning — what percentage of them know their multiplication tables to 12x12 by age nine or what proportion of 14-year olds can accurately identify the error in a pseudo-logical argument — we would simply give the tests and publish the results. Certainly it can be argued that we should perform and publish the results of such careful, descriptive monitoring more consistently and more frequently that we have tended to do in Ontario.

But that is by no means the end or even the heart of the dilemma. In fact, what is wanted is much more than descriptive information: it is, in a sense, truth. Hence the metaphysics. People want to know that their children, and the future workers and thinkers on whom our national and personal well-being will depend, know what they should know, what they will need to know, what must be known, and how to use their knowledge to go on learning for a lifetime. And this kind of knowledge is not relative; it is absolute. It is not a matter of young people knowing more than they know now or more than their Japanese peers know; it is about knowing all that it is essential to know, whatever that is. It is about absolute, not relative, standards about what must be known. Such standards depend on either revealed truth — stone tablets or the equivalent — or strong social consensus on the question of what is essential, universal knowledge. We need to assess our students'

progress against standards, and the way to do that is not the traditional norm-referenced standardized bubble-card.

But it is unfortunately obvious that such absolute truth and knowledge, about matters secular at least, is not deliverable in this life. So we will all have to settle for something less, which is nonetheless something considerably more than we have now. Not the certifiable, heaven-sent truth, but a very considerable increment in the degree of understanding that we share about what must be learned, and with it a very significant increase in the credibility of public education in the eyes of its owners, the public. A big improvement, to be sure, but not the absolute answer.

However, we will not get that big increment in public credibility simply by doing more and better testing and reporting. Those steps are necessary, but they are definitely not sufficient. I have no doubt about that, and I offer as illustrative evidence what happened last year, when the Ministry of Education and

To deal with our growing intolerance for ambiguity, we desire absolutes in a reality in which all is relative.

Training published the results of the first Grade 9 province-wide test in communication skills — reading and writing most particularly. The scores were spread across a six-point scale (for the English version of the test), and the percentage of students scoring at each point was shown. As well, the six points were labelled qualitatively: one was dependent, two was limited, three was adequate, four was competent, five was proficient, six was superior. So the Ministry was able to report what percentage of students performed adequately or less or more than adequately. It also published a few samples of written work at the various performance levels, so that readers would have a picture of what adequate and other levels of writing looked like.

The results were greeted as very satis-

factory by one major newspaper and very unsatisfactory by another. But on what basis, we must ask, would anyone decide whether the results were or were not satisfactory? Clearly, individuals, like newspapers, differ in what they view as an adequate level of performance for 14-year olds. And they will continue to differ. But I believe that at the heart of this educational reform is the opportunity, and the fundamental responsibility, to bring the discussion about standards out into the open, to involve a wide cross-section of the public, and to use that process to move us closer to a common understanding and agreement about what it is that students must know; to move us closer, in this world of relative and relational reality, to some standards which — while they will still be confined to paper not stone tablets — will make sense to a broad spectrum of the public. That is our responsibility in public education: not only to use our professional knowledge and expertise to create the best programs and assessment and report tools that we can, but also to recognize and honour our mandate which is to act *in loco parentis*, by working to provide the education that the larger public wants its students to have.

We do that now, sometimes. Sometimes, we are pretty slow about it. The public's concern for computer literacy, and their desire to see schools strengthen that emphasis, has outpaced our response; we are only now beginning to put the resources into that area. But it is in the fundamental knowledge and skills areas, the famous new basics, that the need for a common understanding and a more informed consensus is most urgent. And the only way to achieve that, or to move towards it, is by trying to get more people to look more closely at students' work. We need to take samples, like those that appeared in the newspapers last year, and use them to involve — along with university, elementary, and high school teachers — parents, students, workers, business people, poets, plumbers, and politicians in serious conversation about what a 14-year old ought to be able to read, write, understand, and communicate. We cannot allow people to tell us that it is our job, the professional educators' job alone, to decide what the standards would be. It is our job to participate in the discussion, and to bring to bear what we know and believe, but it is not our exclusive job to decide. Until such decisions are based on

a broad spectrum of opinion, as well informed as we can help make it, there will be no decrease in public confusion and contention about whether schools are doing the job. It does not matter how well we think we are teaching students if we are not *perceived* to be teaching them what they or their parents think they need to know.

We, all the professionals and the larg-

It does not matter how well we think we are teaching students if we are not *perceived* to be teaching them what they or their parents think they need to know.

er public, must acknowledge that there is no single truth about what must be known and that in order for teachers to do the job we want them to do, we have to be clear what the job is. We all have to look at the possible and at what we think is the ideal and consider the gap between them. We must agree on markers of progress, understanding that progress depends on a common understanding of what progress looks like, and that common understanding depends on common participation in a serious, ongoing conversation about what we think it is important for children to learn and teachers to teach.

I have great confidence in the professional expertise that will be available to us in creating valid and reliable assessment and reporting mechanisms. And I have equal confidence in the ability of our teachers to help students meet whatever standards we may agree upon. I look forward to helping to bring this expertise and ability to bear in creating measures which will ensure that the public is well served by and well informed about its public school system. Because I am a great believer in the value of education, I look forward, as well, to serving as a catalyst in a process of public education about public education and in the applica-

tion of skill and will to bring about improved accountability based on a broad understanding of what we want our educational institutions to achieve.

The Commission's mandate was "to present a vision and action plan to guide Ontario's reform of elementary and secondary education." The Report did this. First it listed its in-school reforms and then articulated its real vision — that societal change must be faced if change in education is to be adequate. It identified four "engines of transformation" to drive "the changes to traditional education."

There is a children's book we all recall titled *The Little Engine That Could*. The refrain "I think I can, I think I can" repeated with determination by this little engine is like the message of the four big engines of this report, with some alteration to read "We know we can, we know we can" because all four engines are inextricably interwoven. Reform and renewal will only happen when the interconnections are clear and our actions recognize them.

The First Engine: A New Kind of School Community Alliance

The Ministry says all schools must have a school council in place by the end of the 1995/96 school year that includes parents, community representation, student representation (in high schools), principal, teacher, and another staff member. This council "will advise the principal and the school board" on budgeting, curriculum, anti-racist education, violence prevention, information flow, extra-curricular activities, community liaison, and selecting a new principal when necessary. This powerful engine has very significant impacts on the other three engines. It also has a lot to do with how we're going to be accountable, because these councils will need accurate information about how the students in their school are doing. They will need to know specifically and generally how they can help. If we are going to really embrace the notion of parents as partners, if we're going to take seriously all the research that's been done that so clearly points to the fact that when children's parents are engaged in the life of the school, children always do better, then we're going to have to train our teachers, our support staff, and our school leaders to make those parents genuinely

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feel that they're welcome and that their contribution is not only valued but essential. So the training needs and the recertification issues around the College of Teachers may come into play here. Perhaps that's the way for teachers to renew their professionalism; maybe they need to think about how they relate to parents, and there should be a scheme to help them do that, as part of the renewal that's expected of them.

The Second Engine: Early Childhood Education.

Clearly the Commission's vision has been somewhat modified by the Minister's announcements, but a new full-day early childhood education program is going to be introduced across the province — not new for some of us, but certainly new in some parts of the province of Ontario. This particular approach will, of course, have a heavy focus on what early literacy means. I think that that's a very significant factor to take into account as we begin to consider that the Grade 3 literacy and numeracy test or process that we will use to ensure that we know what young people are doing at that age. Again, the connection of this to parents and to teacher education is clear. Finding suitable indicators of developing literacy in children in these early years is vital, and there must be a delicate balance to make sure that we don't make premature, unproductive, or overly formalized judgments, or impose on those children and their teachers strictures that will be counterproductive.

The Third Engine: Teacher Education

I've talked about the third engine already — teacher education, teacher renewal, teacher professionalism. It seems to me that transforming schools, as John Evans has said so clearly, is the key to all of this. Schools can't be transformed without the teachers being very much in the driver's seat. Teachers must be agents of change. All the system-wide testing in the world, says the Commission, will have no effect unless teachers use the data to improve and refine their programs and teaching methods. There's an interesting body of research, mostly done in the United States, which is very clear that reform efforts have failed over and over

again, when teachers' voices haven't been heard, when all of those barriers to implementation, which John Evan's informants told him about, went unrecognized. It seems to me that the area of accountability and assessment can't begin to have new life in this province unless teachers become excellent at it themselves. I don't think we can do our job in the Quality and Accountability Office unless teachers recertification and retraining helps them do their job better, and it's my view that the work we do should release teachers to do what they do best.

The Fourth Engine: Information Technology

Perhaps the essential thing here is the connection between metacognitive skills and the use of computers. According to some studies of information-technology-based programs in schools, the students involved were better in the way they organized and accomplished their work than students in conventional programs and they routinely employed high-level inquiry, collaborative, and problem-solving skills. If that is so, these are skills that are not yet commonly evidenced in our schools, so it will be very important to monitor the relationship between students' use of such technology and patterns of success in school. Research tells us that habits of mind can be fostered, and perhaps computers can help us in this. The links between such habits and increased ability to handle abstraction and generalizations are beginning to be clearer. And I think the work we're about to undertake will require some sampling techniques to help us come to grips with that idea.

I believe the whole question of accountability and assessment has a lot to do with proving and improving, and I believe that we have three tasks at hand. The first is to provide clear, timely, and relevant information about how young people are doing. The second is to intervene and to suggest appropriate improvement strategies where we see the need for them. Third, and probably as important as the first two, we need to focus on the enhancement and the promotion of good practice, because there is excellent practice in our schools. It needs to be understood, it needs to be communicated and widely shared, and it needs to be fostered.

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